OBERLIN

MRS. JOSEPHINE E. BUTLER

GUILLE-ALLÈS LIBRARY.

Time Allowed.—This Book may be kept **14** days, including the day of issue, and may be renewed once, unless required by another borrower. If a renewal is desired the book must be returned to the Librarian for that purpose.

Punctuality in Returning Books—It is not intended to establish a system of fines for the detention of books beyond the time specified by the rules; but it is hoped borrowers will understand that any want of punctuality on their part in this respect, must necessarily cause disappointment to other borrowers who may be waiting for books thus detained.

Borrowers' Tickets are not transferable; and no book can be issued without the ticket, which will be placed either in the book or in the Indicator, according to the class of book required. Borrowers returning books without taking out others at the same time, must leave their tickets with the Librarian until other books are required.

The Indicator.—To faciliate the rapid issue of books in Fiction, and save trouble and loss of time to the borrower, it is necessary that he should consult the Indicator, which will show at a glance whether the required book is IN OR OUT.

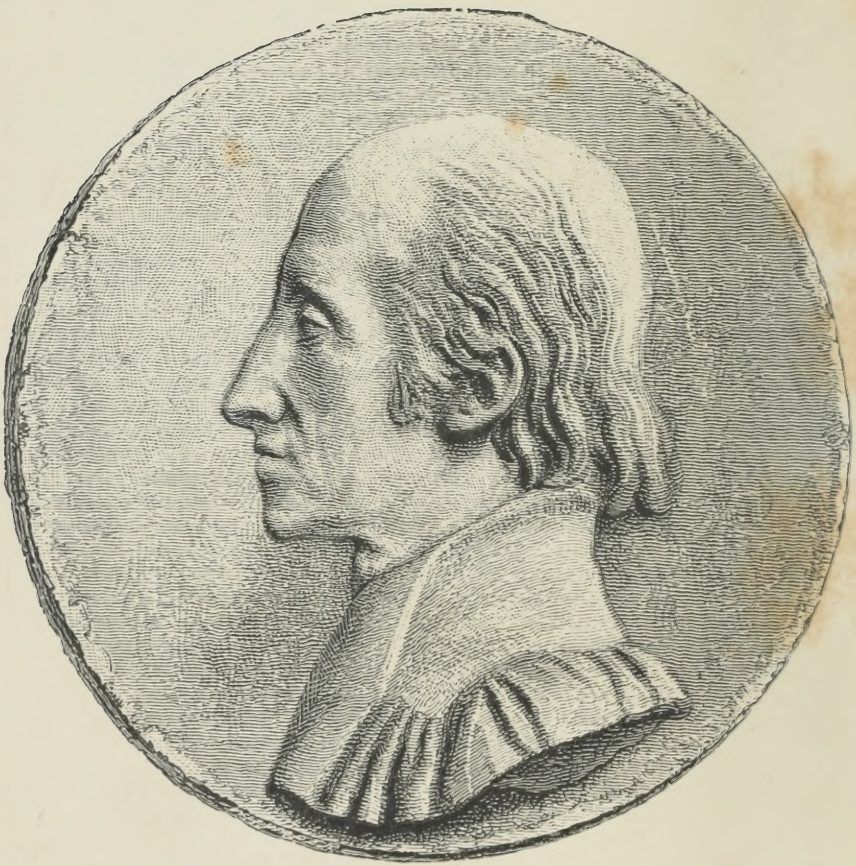
Damage or Loss.—Any book lost must be replaced by the borrower; and any book damaged will be charged for according to the injury it has sustained. It is particularly requested that notice may be given of any scribbling or damage that is perceived in any of the books.

Protection of the Books.—The books must not be entrusted to children, nor exposed to rain during their transit to or from the Library.

General Comfort and Order.—For the general comfort and convenience of all concerned, borrowers are particularly requested not to bring DOGS, or to smoke pipes or cigars in any part of the building.

N.B.—The authorities confidently rely on those who may use the Library for the careful protection of every book from injury; and for the punctual observance of the conditions on which they are lent.

£2



OBERLIN.

THE LIFE

OF

JEAN FREDERIC OBERLIN

PASTOR OF THE BAN DE LA ROCHE.

BY

MRS. JOSEPHINE E. BUTLER.

LONDON:
THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY,
56 PATERNOSTER ROW, 65 ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD,
AND 164 PICCADILLY.

EDINBURGH: PRINTED BY LORIMER AND GILLIES.

CONTENTS.

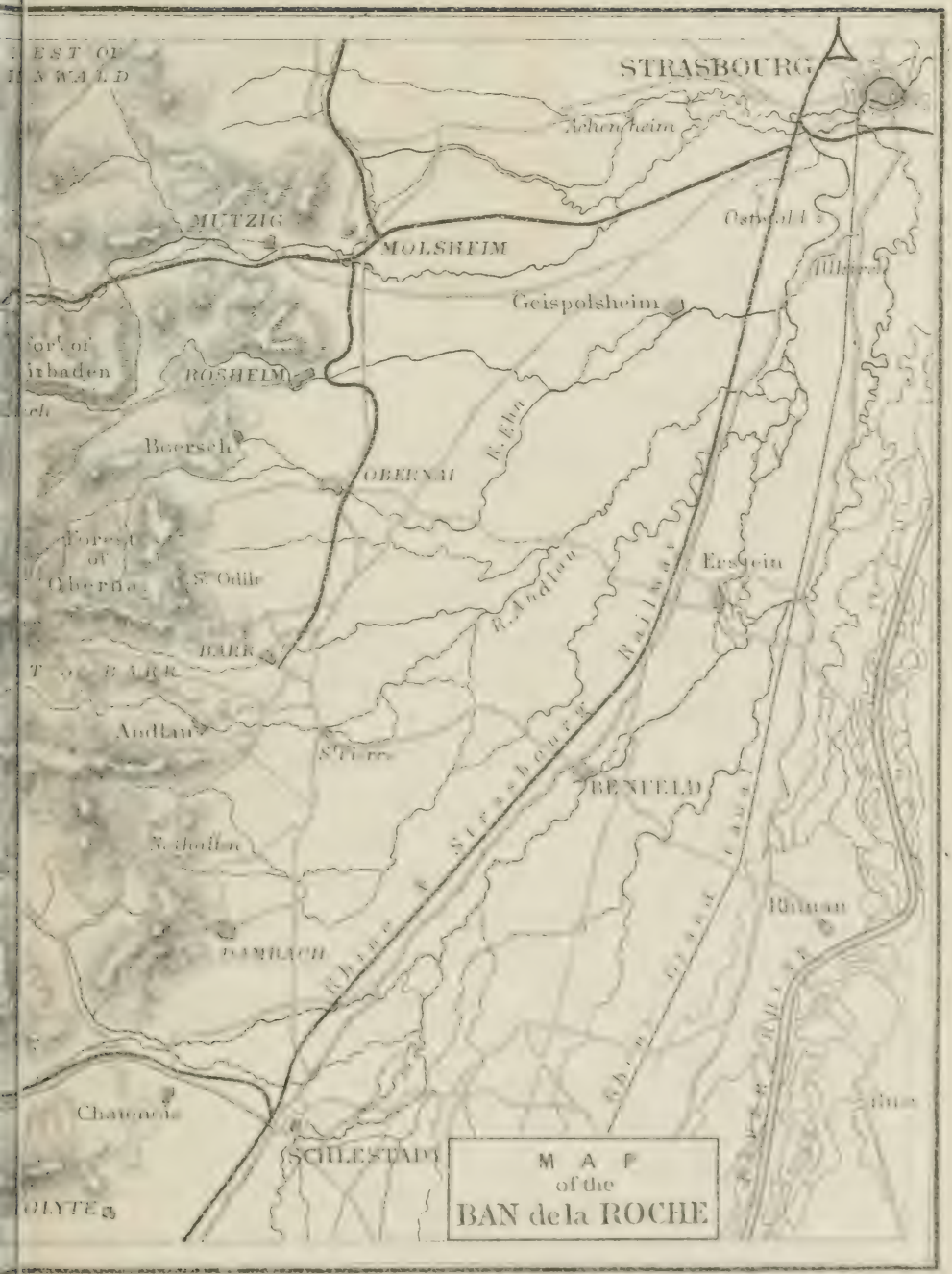
CHAPTER V.

CHAPTER VI.

CHAPTER VII.

CHAPTER VIII.

Lutzelhausen
Wische
Rass
le Donon
Allarmont
Schirmeck
la Broque
Barembach
Rothau
Neuviller
Wildersbach
Natzviller
Solbach
Fouday
Waldersbach
Belmont
Blancherupt
St. Blaise la Roche
Bellefosse
du Feu
SENONES
le Puid
Saulxures
le Menil
Saales
St. Jean d'Orm
ST. DIE
Neuviller
Lusse
Wisembach
STE MARIE aux Mines


STRASBOURG
Achenheim
MUTZIG
MOLSHEIM
Geispolsheim
ROSHEIM
Beersch
OBERNAI
R. Ehn
Forest of Oberna
St. Odile
Rathsamhausen
Ersheim
Railway
BARR
Andlau
St Pierre
Strasbourg
BENFELD
Rhinau
DAMBACH
Rhine
Canal
Chatenois
SCHLESTADT
MAP
of the
BAN de la ROCHE

LIFE OF OBERLIN.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY—A VISIT TO THE BAN DE LA ROCHE.

THE scene of the labours of Jean Frederic Oberlin has frequently been described in periodicals at home and abroad, and by visitors attracted there by veneration for this "great apostle of charity, this saint of the Protestant Church," as his countrymen delight, and with reason, to style him. "A visit to the Ban de la Roche," says a writer in the "Eglise et Patrie," of September, 1880, "is not a visit in the ordinary sense; it is a pilgrimage." The late Mr. and Mrs. Cunningham made this pilgrimage in 1820, and an interesting sketch of the country, and of the character and work of Oberlin, given in a series of letters from Mrs. Cunningham to friends in England, was embodied in the "Memoir of J. F. Oberlin," published in London, in 1829. As the appearance of the country has undergone some change since that time, it will not be uninteresting to the reader to present a more modern picture of it, written also in a

letter to a friend, by one of the more recent pilgrims to this spot, in the summer of 1879. The informal style of this familiar communication is purposely preserved, as tending to convey better than a remodelled account could do, the freshness of first impressions :—

"STRASBOURG, *August*, 1879. — We have just returned from our excursion to the Ban de la Roche, which we visited with the idea of perhaps being enabled to revive in England the memory of the good man whose name is so closely connected with the place—Pastor Oberlin. The part of Basse Alsace where he lived is a considerable distance from Gerardmer, where we have been staying. Although the mountain chain of the Vosges continues in a direct line from the one place to the other, our best way of reaching the Ban de la Roche seemed to cross the mountains from Gerardmer, which we did by the beautiful and romantic Schlucht Pass—too little known as yet by English travellers—to come down to Strasbourg, and start thence on our pilgrimage to the home of the venerable pastor.

"We left Strasbourg by an early morning train. The line is a modern one ; it runs south-west, slightly up hill, till it reaches Rothau, one of the little towns forming the group of villages which were the scenes of Oberlin's labours.

"I ought to tell you that on the last day of our stay at Gerardmer, the Pastor of Rothau happened to be there ; I sat next to him at *table d'hote*, and

spoke to him of our wish to visit Oberlin's country, asking him the most direct way of getting there. He not only gave us full directions, but also invited us to visit his house, and to allow him to guide us to Fouday and Waldbach (or Waldersbach), and other villages in the valley. Accordingly, on our arrival at Rothau, this pastor—M. Dietz—who had hurried back from Gerardmer to receive us, met us at the station, and walked with us to his modest little manse.

"Rothau is a primitive place; no regular carriage for hire exists in the town; but our host engaged for us a neat kind of open cart with springs, drawn by an exceedingly lively and fast-trotting pony. After a *déjeuner* with him and his wife, of light dishes and fine mountain strawberries, we started in this conveyance for Fouday. I must explain that when Oberlin was called to civilise and evangelise this district, it was exceedingly wild and uncultivated, and the people were almost savages.

"The long winding valleys of the Ban de la Roche, only a century and a-half ago contained a population absolutely lost in the heart of the mountains, and unknown to the rest of the world. These valleys lie at the foot of, and are surrounded by, mountain ranges, of which the highest point, that of the Champ du feu, is 3600 feet high. The hills (according to geological authorities) are composed of granite and metamorphosed slaty rocks, with basalt and greenstone projecting on the sides of the valleys here and there, in irregular points and columns. The upper hillsides are thickly clothed with pine forests. The

silver fir is sometimes seen here of a great height and beauty, though it is not so abundant or magnificent as in that district of the Vosges range near Gerardmer.

"Oberlin's pastoral care extended over five or six villages, at a considerable distance apart, reaching on one side to Rothau. This wide district, so desolate when he first went there, is now full of life and industry, though still somewhat thinly populated. There are cotton and linen mills, and tape manufactories, which began to be established in his time, and through his influence and that of his friend, M. Le Grand. There is, however, no smoke; the air is cool and pure, (in winter fiercely cold); the land tolerably well cultivated, chiefly old grass land and hay-fields, with a few corn-fields. There is still a certain wildness about the place, and the pine-covered hills surrounding it on every side give the valley a somewhat lonely and out-of-the-world character. It took us nearly an hour to drive, almost at full gallop, southward, along the winding valley, by the side of a rapid, dancing little river, the Bruche, to Fouday, another of the villages of the Ban de la Roche. On the way we crossed the Pont de Charité, the bridge which Oberlin built, almost with his own hands. There was no bridge when he came there, and the river was often flooded, making the wild path, which is now superseded by an excellent road, impassable for the wretched mountaineers, often carrying away their little huts, and cutting them off for days and weeks together from the means of procuring food, other than roots and wild herbs.

"The half-savage people suspected and doubted at first all that Oberlin did, and were horribly afraid of his civilising projects. For some time they would not lift a hand to help him in the making of this bridge; he therefore cheerfully shouldered his axe, and went out day after day felling trees, and then constructing a bridge of wood; which was soon followed by a neat stone bridge. The people gathered gradually around him, with the inquisitive looks of a flock of wild goats; and as they saw him working, they slowly came forward, one by one, and offered a little help. He was always obliged to teach them by his actions, and by first doing himself everything he wished them to learn to do. They were at first incapable of learning anything by precept.

"After crossing the bridge we drove through a small mountain pass, over which Oberlin, by his engineering skill, and with the help of his mountaineers, had continued his good high road. There had been before only a rugged path, almost impassable in winter floods and storms. The road ascended gently after this. We had rocks and pine woods on our right, and open meadow-land on the left, watered by the sparkling river. The vegetation became rather more stunted here, however, and the hillsides more bare.

"Fouday is a small, pretty village. Here we stopped and alighted to see the church and the churchyard wherein is Oberlin's grave, a plain stone slab, headed by a little cross, on which are the words, 'Papa Oberlin,' and beneath, in French, 'He was the

father of this district for fifty years.' Then, accompanied by Pastor Dietz and his wife, we went two or three miles farther on, ascending another valley which turns off nearly at right angles from that at the extremity of which Fouday lies. At the head of this valley lies the village of Waldersbach, where Oberlin's house stands, kept up just as he left it, and where his principal church also is—for he ministered in several little churches widely scattered. The whole of this district is called in German, Steinthal, and, as you already know, in French, the Ban de la Roche,* or Rock Valley; so called from an old castle called the Chateau de la Roche, of which mention is made in the tenth century, and some ruins of which are still to be seen. This castle was a stronghold of robber lords, whence aristocratic brigands sallied forth periodically on pillaging excursions throughout the country, and particularly in the rich valleys of Alsace and Lorraine. It was taken in 1469 by the Duke of Lorraine, when Gerothe von Rathsamhausen, the last of the robber chiefs, was beheaded, and the castle destroyed.

"The principles of the Reformation early penetrated this valley from Strasbourg; nevertheless, few and dim were the ideas of religion or morality which the poor inhabitants had preserved from that time when Oberlin's predecessor first went among them. The population was decimated by the Thirty

* The *Ban* signifies all the district round the castle, whose lord possesses a feudal hold over it. The inhabitants of the Ban were his retainers and serfs.

Years' War, and the plague, which visited it in 1645 to 1650, completed the work of the sword, so that at that date at Fouday there was only one survivor, a woman called Catherine Milano, of Italian origin, with her little boy of seven years. In 1700, it is said that there were only in the whole of the Ban de la Roche thirty-one inhabitants, while at this day there are from five to six thousand.

"The climate is rude and stern. Cold rains and snow begin in September, and scarcely cease earlier than the month of May. The north-east wind, or *bise*, is piercing in winter, and pitilessly 'scourges the face of the traveller.' Violent storms of wind sometimes carry off the roofs of the houses and uproot the trees, and the sudden inundations of the Bruche still at times destroy the fields and bring desolation to the homes of the cultivators. Even in the very hot summer weather in which we visited the place, the higher part of the valley looked a little bald and bleak. It was very hot at noon when we climbed the steep little village street of Waldersbach (in some parts almost a rock staircase) to the manse or parsonage.

"We went first to the church. Over the door are carved the words, 'Ecclesia Modesta,' and truly it is a very modest church. It has the most primitive, rough-hewn wooden pulpit and seats. Some of the original seats are still there, which the people used before their pastor had time to construct proper benches for them; they are simply trunks of pine trees laid upon tressles, with only the branches and

the roughest knots cut off. Where Madame Oberlin's grave is, no one knows. It is strange that the place of her burial should be a mystery. She was a remarkable person, well born, somewhat aristocratic. She died many years before her husband; he was deeply attached to her, and leaned much on her advice and sympathy; he found fault with her on their first acquaintance, on account of the too great elegance of her dress, a fault not too common then, one would imagine, among German women. We saw, in his study, an exquisite miniature of her, painted by himself; he was a good artist and musician, it appears. It is a sweet, noble face; the thick black hair is rolled back from her forehead; an elegant black lace veil rests on her head, falls gracefully over the shoulders, and is pinned across the breast, and she wears a string of rich pearls round her throat. So it appears that Oberlin had learned to pardon just so much of elegance. This refined lady shared his rugged lot when he undertook the civilisation of the savages of the Ban de la Roche, where the people had never even seen a knife and fork, but tore their meat with their hands, until he carved wooden knives for them out of their own forest trees.

"After sitting a little time in the cool shade of the Ecclesia Modesta, we went a few steps higher up the hill to the old house, which we entered through a courtyard shaded by a large sycamore.

It is a curious old straggling house, the rooms small, wainscoted with oak, and furnished with old

carved wardrobes, chiffoniers, and chairs of black oak. The abode of the beloved pastor, and more especially his study, are carefully preserved as nearly as possible in the condition in which he left them. In fact, these 'relics' seem to be almost as reverently cherished by his successors as the little room and various small properties of Catherine of Siena are by devout Italian Catholics. We were first taken into the dining-room or parlour on the ground floor, which was 'close latticed to the brooding heat.' There we were kindly and graciously welcomed by the great-granddaughter of Oberlin. The present pastor, M. Witz, of the Church of the Augsburg Confession, is the eldest son of Oberlin's daughter. There are no descendants of Oberlin of his own name. M. Witz is an aged man, very courteous and kind. He was just driving away from his house, together with his son, Oberlin's great-grandson, to fulfil some pastoral duty, and we were received by the lady I have mentioned, a lady advanced in age, but very active. She was severely dressed in a straight black gown, and a close nun-like cap; is tall, slight, and still graceful. She opened the door of one of the old oak cupboards, and set before us seltzer water, himbeeren, and wine, cool from their darkened retreat, and then sat down and answered with frank courtesy all the questions we had to ask her concerning her ancestor. She seemed to be a person of strong judgment and good sense, together with a quick appreciation of humour. After she had told us many things, which I briefly recorded, I said to her: 'But every one has faults: what were

the faults in Papa Oberlin's character?' She smiled, and seemed quite pleased when I assured her that I found it difficult to feel sympathy with an absolutely faultless character. She thought for a moment, and then said significantly: '*Il fut extraordinairement vif.*' I added: 'You mean that he was hot-tempered?' She replied: 'Exactly so.' She then told me how, when moved by impatience to get something done, he used to run back and forward in his study, beating his hands together rapidly with a resounding noise, to get rid of his excitement. Sometimes he would call all his children to come to him, and send them flying off one after another on various errands, giving his orders 'like a hailstorm.' Also, like many persons of genius, he liked his own way; he knew his own mind perfectly, and was a little arbitrary in carrying out his plans; nor did he always take contradiction with perfect composure. All this belonged naturally to one who was conscious of an exceptional gift for organising and ruling, and who never lost a moment himself in useless delays or hesitation in the carrying out of his well-laid plans. We were thus perhaps able, in conversation with his descendants, to bring before our minds a more living picture of this commanding, fiery, and lovable man, than we could have done by only reading the biographies written of him.

"The venerable lady then took us to Oberlin's study, a good-sized, irregularly shaped, pleasant old wainscoted room, where are his writing-table, his arm-chair, his books, pictures, walking-stick, spectacles, etc. There are sketches and finished drawings on the walls,

done by himself; some manuscripts, and his diary, kept for many years, and bound in several volumes. The 'Annales de Steinthal' he called it. This we were allowed to peruse, though it was only possible to read a very little in the time at our disposal. His handwriting is most beautiful, and as legible as the clearest print. His friends pointed out some of the most interesting passages, as, for example, several pages with the date of 1792, and others headed 'Terreur,' written during the rule of Robespierre. There is the following entry in French: 'This day the proclamation reached the Ban de la Roche, which orders the immediate cessation of all religious worship, of whatever sect, in France, and the closing of the churches. Such is the will of Master Robespierre, the present drill-serjeant of France.' And then, immediately after, Oberlin had added in German: 'Nevertheless, I intend to continue our religious worship in such manner as we are able.' And he *did* continue the religious worship in such a manner as he was able, and that was after his own dignified, original, and slightly humorous manner. A contemporary nobleman of high character, of the old chivalrous school of French country gentlemen, the lord of the manor in that district, was a great friend to Oberlin and his work. He built him the parsonage in which we were. Another of his friends of the same class was arrested and taken to Paris, and became one of the victims of the Reign of Terror. He was one of that company of high-born ladies and gentlemen who were so long crowded together in one room, and then carted off in

groups to the guillotine. For being a friend of this nobleman and others, Oberlin, though a hearty republican, fell into the ranks of the 'suspected of being suspected,' and was arrested and conducted to Schirmeck,* to the guillotine which had there been erected for the execution of disloyal or suspected Alsatians. Soon after his arrival there, an orderly rode into the town with the news of the death of Robespierre, and Oberlin was released. There is scarcely any notice in Oberlin's diary of this event, only the date is given, with the words, 'returned from Schirmeck,' and an expression of thankfulness to God. We had been struck, in coming along by train, with the beauty of the valley, which was said to be the scene of several executions. Schirmeck is a picturesque little town, with pine-clad hills rising on each side of it, and with bright blue wood-smoke ascending from the chimney of its busy little factory. Among the objects of interest pointed out to me in Oberlin's study, I should mention a portrait of his friend Lavater, the physiognomist, taken during Lavater's last illness, and many curiosities collected for a family museum.

"After a time, M. and Madame Dietz and I set off to return to Fouday on foot, my husband having been obliged to return earlier in the day to Strasbourg. It was now nearly 4 p.m.; the day had 'increased from heat to heat,' and the long slanting hillside on which we had to walk was absolutely without shade; not

* Some accounts give the name of another town of Alsace, Selesbeck; and others say that Strasbourg was the scene of this event.

even a solitary tree under which one could pause to close one's eyes from the blinding whiteness of the road, although the tall pine woods clothed all the hill-tops. The treeless valley seemed to concentrate the sun's rays like a burning-glass. Not bearing well the direct rays of the sun, I felt a little afraid of a rapid walk, and begged my kind companions to go on ahead, and leave me to follow. They did so, and soon were far away, inured as they are to the violent contrasts of heat and cold in the summers and winters of the Ban de la Roche. I paused awhile, and then plunged into the furious sunlight. The only consolation in the way was in hearing the cheerful dashing of the cool river down below, as it leaped from rock to rock, or sang musically over pebbly shallows. I reached Fouday rather exhausted; but here, as so often on life's path, some of God's angels appeared and ministered to us. I did not know to whose residence we were going in Fouday, but was conducted by two young ladies who met us, through a small wicket-gate and garden, into a cool, shaded drawing-room. These ladies were visitors at Fouday, and were staying with the manufacturer of the place, the owner of the mill close by.

"I mentioned that when Oberlin had a little civilised his people, he desired to introduce some active industry among them, other than their absolutely necessary agricultural labours. His friend and fellow-worker, M. Le Grand, a Swiss gentleman, then came and settled in the Ban de la Roche, and established at Fouday the factory which is now there. We had seen

the portrait of M. Le Grand in Oberlin's study at Waldersbach. It is a strong and benevolent face. His son, who succeeded him at Fouday, died, and M. Oschwald, from Schaffhausen, took the factory and settled there. The family live necessarily a retired life, for there is not much of what may be called educated society of their own class in the valleys of Steinthal.

"After they had made us rest awhile, we dropped into conversation, which soon took a grave and interesting turn. I was much attracted to these girls, who were womanly beyond their years in all the serious matters of life, and full of Christian kindness. Their tone of unworldliness was sweet and striking; they were entirely simple and unaffected, and very plainly dressed, yet with natural grace enough to adorn a Parisian drawing-room. The sun having lowered considerably, I went out to make a little sketch of Oberlin's grave in the churchyard quite near. I went alone. I was sitting among the cypresses in the brooding afternoon heat, feeling somewhat the melancholy stillness of the place and atmosphere, and not succeeding well with my sketch, when the silence was broken by a slight rustling of dresses, and a sweet voice behind me, saying, 'We hope you will pardon us, dear madame, but we felt impelled to follow you. We could not help it; but do not let us interrupt your drawing.' It was the two girls, with their wide-brimmed hats, shading faces in which there was a tender, yearning look, as if they wished for further communion, or to do something for me. They sat

some time beside me on one of the flat gravestones, and then we returned to the house together, where our host met us; and we had tea, with varieties of Swiss bread and cakes, and cream such as I had not tasted since we left England. M. Oschwald gave me a white medallion of Oberlin in an ebony frame, and I was struck at once, as many other persons have been, with the resemblance of the profile to that of the venerable John Wesley.

"About seven o'clock, a light spring-cart came to the door to take us back to Rothau. The young ladies and M. Oschwald came out to see us off, he standing with his cap in his hand, and they with the setting sun illuminating their blonde hair, speaking kind farewells, and wishing us all good things. They had, it seemed, formed a little plan for me to be driven back to Rothau by a very old inhabitant of the place, who remembered Oberlin as an aged man, when he himself was a child. He was a healthy, strong old man, with a rosy colour in his withered cheeks, a good-natured smile, and a shrewd expression. As he drove, he began, unasked, to speak of Oberlin. 'You wish to hear all you can of Papa Oberlin, madame?' and then he went on to give a graphic description of his person and manners. 'He always wore an old-fashioned Louis Quatorze coat, a peruke with pigtail (always powdered on Sundays); he carried a gold-headed cane, and wore knee-breeches, and buckles, and lace frills. These he attired himself in every afternoon, when he made his full toilet. He was short of stature, but had great dignity and authority.' The

old man described his firm, well-made figure, his dignified walk, his occasional impetuous and imperious commands, his fun and humour, his beaming smile, his loving-kindness, his strong faith, and that gracious air about him which made every one feel that he lived very near to God.

"Our horse almost galloped down the long winding valley ; a sweet, cool, evening breeze had sprung up, and blew in our faces. It was very exhilarating after the heat of the day ; I felt thankful for all the kindness and hospitality we had met with. We reached the station rather before the time. I got into the railway carriage, our driver and friends having returned to the village. The train was about to start, when suddenly the old driver reappeared breathless on the platform, and, lifting his hat, he said, 'Pardon, madame, I forgot to say that he always wore a three-cornered cocked hat.' The portrait was complete, and the train started for Strasbourg."

CHAPTER II.

EARLY YEARS—FAMILY TRAITS—ANECDOTES OF HIS CHILDHOOD—SCHOOL—UNIVERSITY—PROFESSOR LORENZ—SOLEMN ACT OF SELF-DEDICATION—EXORCISM OF A GHOST—TUTOR IN ZIEGENHAGEN'S FAMILY—VISITED BY STUBER—ACCEPTS INVITATION TO BAN DE LA ROCHE.

JEAN FREDERIC OBERLIN was born at Strasbourg, on the 31st August, 1740, the same year in which were born his two friends, Lavater and Yung-Stilling. His father was a professor in the "gymnase" of Strasbourg. They had seven sons, the eldest of whom, J. J. Oberlin, was the well-known philologist and antiquarian, and the editor of Tacitus. They also had two daughters. Oberlin, the father, was a man of distinguished appearance, genial, enlightened, just, and conscientious. Madame Oberlin was a person of good judgment and considerable cultivation; she wrote some good verses, and studied and delighted in poetry. This excellent couple brought up their family in severe principles, and in the fear of God. Their means were small, and their life was a constant but cheerful struggle against poverty. The father kept up, nevertheless, a custom of presenting all his children with a small gift at the end of each week; generally it was three centimes (less than a farthing)

each ; which, considering the low price of articles then as compared with now, enabled the children to buy sometimes a little white bread in lieu of the usual black bread, or some fruit, and at the same time to have a small fund in reserve. Sometimes a shadow of trouble would cross the father's face, when some liability came before him which he was unable to meet ; the children observing this, and guessing the cause, would run for their little treasure and pour it into his hands ; the father seldom accepted it, but when he did, it was with emotion and gentle words of gratitude to his little helpers. He loved his children, and was never so happy as when in the midst of them.

The family were all seated at their frugal dinner one day, when a neighbour entered, and, looking at the little regiment round the table, remarked to the father, "I pity you, sir." "And why, if you please?" asked M. Oberlin. "Oh! because I see you have seven turbulent sons, all brimming over with life and vivacity ; I have but two, but they are too many for me. They are beyond my management." "Mine, however, are of a different kind," replied M. Oberlin, "are you not, my boys? Look you here, neighbour, if Mr. Death were to come in by that door to carry off one of my children, I would say to him, 'Be off with you, sirrah, I have not one too many;'" and with that he took his cap from his head and flung it violently at the door, to signify the kind of reception which the unwelcome intruder should meet with. This action of flinging his cap from his head was very common

with the subject of this memoir, who would enforce some strong expression by the rapid flight from his hand of this inoffensive missile.

This poor family possessed the treasure of a little "maison de campagne," a cottage in the country, where it was their delight to spend the days of the school vacation. Jean Frederic imbibed here a strong love for military manœuvres, which afterwards developed into the desire, which for some time animated him, to become a soldier. The child used to slip off to a neighbouring garrison, and was often found in the ranks of the soldiers who were being drilled, imitating all their movements, and obeying every word of the superintending officer, much to the amusement of the good-natured recruits. His biographers remark concerning him, that had he adopted the career of a soldier, he would, no doubt, have faced death on the battlefield in the same indomitable spirit in which he braved it many times among the snows and rugged ravines of the Ban de la Roche, in bringing help to the bodies and comfort to the souls of his poor mountaineers.

Firmness and sensibility were markedly united in his character. Some anecdotes of his childhood illustrate this. When crossing the market-place of Strasbourg one day, he saw some rude boys ill-naturedly elbowing a poor peasant woman in order to upset a basket of eggs which she was bringing for sale. While they were tumultuously enjoying their practical joke, the poor woman wrung her hands and wept over her wrecked property. Jean Frederic, not at all

intimidated by the number of these youths, thundered bitter invectives at them all round, and then, begging the woman to wait, he ran home, and quickly returning, poured into her hands his savings of many weeks, which amply repaid her for her loss.

Official tyranny was not more agreeable to the soul of this young rebel against injustice than was private malice. He saw one day a police-officer ill-treating a poor crippled beggar. He pushed himself between the aggressor and his victim, expressing loudly his indignation against the barbarous cruelty of the police agent. The latter, feeling his dignity compromised, was about to arrest his childish accuser, when the bystanders interposed with a threat of reporting him to his superior, and he was forced to release both the cripple and his young defender. Some days later, Jean Frederic, on entering a narrow street, perceived this police-officer approaching at a little distance. "Shall I run away?" he said to himself. "No, I tried to help a poor cripple; God will now help me;" and he stalked boldly past the policeman, who could not help smiling at the heroic demeanour of the little fellow.

The following incident shows how well he had imbibed the teaching of Christ, early received in his home, in combining humility with courage. A young bully, passing him in the street, knocked his hat from his head in a violent manner, at the same time calling him vile names. Some neighbours, by whom he was beloved, signified their readiness to punish the offender; but the boy quietly replaced his hat, and

walked on without saying a word. This rude youth, happening to meet him again soon after, greeted him in a friendly and courteous manner, not unmixed with self-reproach.

Jean Frederic attended the school of his father for some years. He was an industrious scholar. Having the misfortune to suffer from a "very ungrateful memory," especially for the rules of grammar and for historical dates and facts, he was obliged to devote twice the time to the mastery of some subjects which his fellow-students, for the most part, required. But he made up for this defect by assiduous industry, writing and rewriting what he found it difficult to retain, until he had impressed it on his memory. For this purpose, he made it a rule—and kept his rule—to rise very early in the morning, being thoroughly convinced of the truth of the adage, "*Aurora musis amica.*"

Young Oberlin left the gymnase in 1755, for the Protestant University of Strasbourg, at that time one of the best in Europe. The range of studies pursued there was large, and Oberlin seems to have profited by this, to judge by a somewhat pedantic letter which he afterwards wrote to a Roman Catholic student of theology of the seminary at Nancy, where some 300 students resided under one roof. This young man appears to have asked of him a few humble questions concerning the course of study which was desirable for a student of theology. He replied—

"You ask me, sir, if Greek and Hebrew formed, after Latin, our principal studies. No, sir; in the course of a few years

I had to study the following sciences, (but during that time I was not shut up in any house or seminary whatever, but, by teaching others, small or great, I earned money to pay my instructors):—Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Rhetoric, Metaphysics, Arithmetic, Geometry, Trigonometry, Astronomy, Ancient and Modern Geography, Universal History, Physics, Natural History, the History of Philosophy, Law and Jurisprudence, Egyptian, Greek, Roman and Hebrew Antiquities. After these come the Theological studies, *i.e.*, 'Dogmatic Theology, Exegesis, Ecclesiastical History, always accompanied by relative geography, study of the doctrine of the different Churches or communions, compared with the doctrine of the Bible, Pastoral Theology, Biblical Study.'"

He closes his letter with the following wise words:—"As bread is used by us with all our other food, during our whole life, so ought the study of the Word of God to accompany all our other studies. That Word should be our aliment and guide to the end of our pilgrimage."

In April, 1758, Oberlin took the degree of Bachelor; in 1763, he was created a Doctor of Philosophy. On this occasion he prepared a thesis, and sustained it in debate, in Latin, on the subject, *De virium vivarum atque mortuarum mensuris*, on the system of Leibnitz.

His independence and originality of character are illustrated by the following incidents:—His mother followed very devoutly the religious teaching of Professor Lorenz of the Strasbourg University. Lorenz was a powerful preacher, of an "orthodoxy more than rigid." Full of ardour for the salvation of souls, he nevertheless, by his want of charity, chilled and perplexed some tender minds, while his polemical vehemence made him many enemies. Madame

Oberlin was most desirous that her son Jean Frederic should go and hear this preacher, and used every means short of actual coercion to cause him to do so. After holding out against this wish for some time, Oberlin went one day to hear the professor preach. He was so much struck by what he heard, that he seldom afterwards missed an opportunity of attending his sermons. At a later period he attended the lectures of Professor Lorenz as his pupil at the university. The Superior Ecclesiastical Court some time after considered it necessary, for certain polemical and disciplinary reasons, to suspend this preacher. His pupils fell off, most of them thinking it well to avoid a teacher who had been publicly disgraced. Oberlin, on the contrary, fired up on behalf of the suspended professor, and, beating about in his brain for some method of publicly testifying his continued allegiance, he hit on the following plan:—He used to go punctually every morning at the hour at which the professor's lectures were wont formerly to commence at his house; he rang the bell conspicuously and ostentatiously, in order to attract the notice of the neighbours; when the servant opened the door, he made a profound reverence to him, and then retired. Professor Lorenz, however, some years afterwards, sorely wounded the sensibilities of his loyal pupil. When Oberlin's father died, Lorenz, by way of manifesting sympathy for the affectionate and mourning son, said to him, "Your father's death must be indeed very painful to you, dear Oberlin, the more so, because, although a perfectly honourable man, there

is no hope that he could ever reach heaven, seeing that he was not of the number of the elect, nor truly regenerate." Oberlin replied with indignation, "Monsieur le Professeur!—I am perfectly at rest on that score; for just as sure as I am that God has promised to all those who believe in Him that He will hear their prayers, so sure am I that my revered father is in heaven."

During the whole of his student life, Oberlin was very poor, and obliged to economise to the utmost. This obligation caused him to be spoken of by his fellow-students as a miser, and mean. One day he was crossing a bridge with a fellow-student whose pocket was always well replenished. The latter, meaning to give Oberlin a lesson in a generous carelessness in respect to money, took from his purse a silver-piece and flung it into the river, remarking with an air of superiority to his comrade, "See that, Fritz!" Oberlin made no reply. Presently they met a helpless blind man; Oberlin took from his purse a silver-piece of the same value as that which lay at the bottom of the river, and gave it to the blind man, saying to his companion, "See that, Paul!" In all such attempts at raillery, Oberlin appears generally, to use a familiar expression, to have "got the best of it." He had a quick wit and a shrewd sense of humour.

There is no trace in the memoirs of this good man of any distinct period of severe mental conflict, or of any crisis in his spiritual life so marked as to produce any corresponding change in his outward conduct. Brought up in the fear of God, and in strict and

simple habits of life, he seems to have passed gradually and gently from childhood to manhood in grace, as in stature, and never to have materially swerved from the faith which he had early imbibed. Nevertheless, there are indications of occasional severe and prolonged conflicts with himself, in the effort to subdue the extreme "vivacity" of his temperament, the impetuous feelings, the impatience and the self-will which, but for the grace of God and his own manful self-discipline, would have marred and crippled in him the development of the Christian character. And this conflict continued long after the deliberate act of self-consecration which he recorded at the age of twenty, and which it is well should be given here without curtailment.

"Solemn Act of Consecration of himself to God, written by J. F. Oberlin, on the 1st January, 1760:—

"Eternal and infinitely holy God! I ardently desire to be permitted to present myself before Thee, in deep humility and heartfelt contrition. I know that a creature of earth such as I am, is wholly unworthy to present himself before Thy Divine Majesty, before the King of kings and Lord of lords—especially at such a season as this, when he designs to enter into a covenant with Thee.

"But Thou Thyself, O God of mercy, Thou Thyself hast willed and planned this alliance, which Thou hast offered to me by Thy Son in Thine infinite mercy. Thou hast inclined my heart to accept it. I come, then, to Thee. I confess that I am a great sinner. I beat upon my breast, and say with the repentant publican, 'Be merciful to me a sinner.' I come, because I have been invited in the mercy of Thy Son, and I rest entirely in His perfect righteousness. I beseech Thee, for His sake, to pardon my unrighteousness, and to remember no more my sins. Ah yes, Lord, I entreat Thee to be reconciled with Thy un-

faithful servant. I am now convinced of the rights Thou hast over me, and I desire nothing so much as to belong to Thee. Holy God, in the most solemn manner I give myself to Thee this day. 'Hear, O heavens! and give ear, O earth!' I confess this day that the Lord is my God. I declare myself to-day to be of the number of His children, and that I am one of His people. Hear my words, O my God, and write in Thy book that I wish from to-day to be wholly Thine. In the name of the Lord, the God of Hosts, I renounce this day all former lords that have had dominion over me, the pleasures of earth into which I was drawn, and all carnal desires; I renounce all perishable things, that God may be my all. I consecrate to Thee all I am and all I have, my mind, my body, my means, and my time. Help me, O Father of mercies, to use all to Thy glory (and in obedience to Thy will). To be Thine!—this shall be my humble and ardent desire through the blessed ages of eternity. Shouldst Thou entrust me in this life with the work of bringing others to Thee, give me courage and strength to declare myself openly on Thy side. Bestow on me the grace, not only of devoting myself to Thee, but of persuading my brethren to dedicate themselves also.

"I have the will, O Holy Spirit, to continue faithful unto the end of my life, and Thy grace will sustain me. Enable me, during the rest of my days, to attain to what is now wanting in me, and to amend all my ways. Suffer not the things of earth to exercise dominion over me, but let me, during the short space of life, live only to Thee. Let Thy grace enable me not only to tread the path which I perceive to be the best, but ever to be most active in walking therein. I place myself, and all that belongs to me, under Thy guidance. Order everything as Thy infinite wisdom sees to be best. I place myself unreservedly in Thy hands, O God, for the disposal of every event which concerns me. 'Thy will be done, not mine!' Employ me, O Lord, as Thy instrument set apart for Thy service! Look upon me as forming part of Thy people. Wash me in the blood of Thy beloved Son; array me in His righteousness; sanctify me by His Spirit; conform me more and more to His image; purify and fortify my heart; grant me the consolation

of spending all my life in the continual sense of Thy presence, O my Father and my God! And after having endeavoured to obey Thee on earth in submission to Thy will, take me hence at what time and in what manner Thou seest good. At the moment of death, and at the gates of eternity, let me still remember this covenant, and in Thy service employ my latest breath; and then, Lord, do Thou also remember this covenant, when Thou seest my heart in anguish, or that memory fails me in that hour. Then, O Heavenly Father, look down on me in mercy, when Thou seest Thy child prostrated in weakness, and struggling with death. I would not prescribe to Thee, O my Father, the manner in which Thou shalt take me to Thyself. I would not even ask Thee to save me in that hour from cruel pains. No! none of these things shall be the object of my prayers. I only ask, and that with strong desire, in the name of my Jesus, the power to glorify Thee in my last hours, and to manifest in the midst of the sufferings which perhaps Thy wise providence will see good to send me, perfect patience and submission to Thy holy will. Strengthen my soul, give it strong confidence when Thou shall call it hence, and receive it into Thy eternal heart of love; give it an entrance into the abode of those who die in the Lord Jesus, that abode where joys which cannot be expressed are the heritage of a youth which knows no decay. Bestow on my soul abundance of peace and joy, while it waits the fulfilment of the promises which Thou hast given to those who are Thine, that they shall rise again in glory and shall delight themselves for ever in Thy blessed presence.

"And when I shall have gone down to the grave, if these pages should fall into the hands of friends whom I shall have left behind on earth, oh, grant that their hearts may be sensibly touched by them. Give them grace not only to read them as the true expression of my heart, but to experience themselves what is there expressed. Teach them to fear the Lord my God, and to take refuge, with me, under the shadow of Thy wings, for time and for eternity. Give them a part in all the blessings and all the benefits of that covenant which we form with Thee, through Jesus Christ, the Great Mediator. To Him, and to Thee, O

Father, and to the Holy Spirit, be ascribed eternal praises by the millions redeemed by Thee, and by the spirits in glory, in whose labours and in whose happiness Thou wilt hereafter call them to share!

"My God, the God of my fathers! Thou who keepest Thy covenant, and who scatterest Thy blessings to a thousand generations, I humbly entreat Thee, knowing as Thou dost how deceitful is the heart of man, to grant me grace to enter into this covenant with all sincerity of heart, and to continue faithful to this act of consecration made at my baptism. Let the Lord be witness for ever that I sign this promise with a firm and good will to keep it.

"JOHN FREDERIC OBERLIN.

"STRASBOURG, 1*st January*, 1760."

This act of consecration was solemnly renewed, 1st January, 1770, at Waldbach. Again it was renewed in 1822, when Oberlin was seventy-two years of age. Upon the margin of this last renewal are written the words, "Seigneur, aie pitié de moi!" ("Lord have mercy on me!") Is it not often at the close of the Christian's life, rather than at the outset, when self-knowledge is yet imperfect, that the cry goes forth with the fullest pathos and the deepest meaning, "Lord, have mercy on me!"

In 1760, Oberlin became a candidate for the theological degree at his University, and from that time a still greater earnestness marked his character and pursuits. He was much beloved by those who knew him intimately, and many persons confided to him their difficulties and troubles. An artizan came to consult him, on one occasion, concerning an apparition or ghost which visited him, he declared, every night. At midnight this ghost appeared, in the guise

of an ancient knight, who persisted in beckoning to him to follow him, and invited him towards the cellar, where he indicated a hidden treasure. "Several times," said the man, "I have summoned courage to follow the spectre, but every time we entered the cellar, horrible noises, and the appearance of a large black dog terrified me so much that I retreated. This nightly terror on the one side, and the desire to possess the treasure on the other, torment me to such a degree that I can no longer do my daily work; my employers dismiss me, and I am being ruined. I beseech you, therefore, to come to my dwelling, and conjure this spectre either to desist from appearing before us, or else to make it possible for me to approach the hidden treasure; for nothing can resist your faith."

Oberlin replied to the artizan that he knew nothing about exorcism, that the ghost was but a phantom of his imagination, and that he must endeavour to recover his usual prosperity by means of constant work and prayer. The artizan replied that it was all in vain; he had already made trial of these means. Oberlin, seeing that the man was really the victim of a fixed idea, determined to adopt in regard to him the character of a physician, and to endeavour to treat him for mental disease. He promised to come to his house. Close upon the midnight hour, therefore, Oberlin appeared. There were seated around the artizan, his wife and a company of his friends, all gravely prepared to see the ghost. Suddenly all faces grew pale, and the master of the house trem-

bling turned to Oberlin, and said, "Do you not see him? do you not see the old knight?" "I see nothing at all," Oberlin replied. "But, Master Oberlin, he is approaching you directly." "I do not see him." "There he is standing just before you." "For all that, I do not see him. But since he chooses to come so near to me, I will speak to him;" and then he arose from his seat, and thus harangued the ghost: "They tell me, Sir Count, that you are standing exactly before me, though I cannot see you. This fact shall not prevent me, however, from telling you that it is disgraceful conduct on your part, by the fruitless promise of a hidden treasure, to endeavour to cause the ruin of an honest man, who, up to this time, has fulfilled his calling with zeal and fidelity. You are making him a bad husband and father. You are bringing him into poverty and misery; upon you falls this terrible responsibility. Begone from this place, and tempt no more this honest man with delusive hopes!" At these words, spoken in a tone of quaint pathos, all the persons present believed they saw the ghost retire. Oberlin perceived the salutary effect produced, and also retired. The artizan, filled with veneration of the young theologian who had shown such self-possession at that terrible moment, never more complained of nocturnal visitations, and became again, what he had formerly been, a useful and laborious workman.

Oberlin constantly persevered in the habit of teaching, while he himself studied, in order that by his earnings he might not be a burden on his poor

parents. He also regarded the habit as a useful part of the task of acquiring; according to the adage, "*docendo discimus.*" At first he gave lessons to very young children, for which he received an extremely modest remuneration. His assiduity in teaching, and his pleasant, kindly manners with his young pupils, however, won for him an introduction to the family of M. Ziegenhagen, the first surgeon of Strasbourg, a distinguished man in many ways. He became tutor to M. Ziegenhagen's children in 1762.

His residence in this house ought, it would have seemed, to have been an unmixed advantage to the young man. That it was not altogether so happy an experience as it might have been, was owing to Oberlin's characteristic independence of character, which, it cannot be denied, harmonised ill with the position of a domestic tutor. M. Ziegenhagen sent a friend to negotiate the terms with the young pedagogue, and the following is an exact account of what took place on that occasion. The friend read out the conditions:—

"(1) 'The children shall always be properly washed, dressed, etc., by the tutor.'

"Oberlin's reply. He will always recommend cleanliness and neatness to his pupils, but he will not undertake any domestic work which would cause him to waste the time which should be devoted to their instruction and to his own improvement; which latter he does not mean, in any case, to neglect.'

"(2) 'The tutor shall walk out with the children three times a-week.'

"Reply, 'He will walk with them more or less frequently, as circumstances allow.'

"(3) 'During the walk, the tutor shall engage in useful and improving conversation with his pupils.'

"Reply, 'That is his habit at all times, when a fitting opportunity offers.'

"(4) 'The tutor shall carve the meat at meals.

"Reply, 'He will do nothing of the kind.'

The young tutor was accepted nevertheless.

His sojourn in the house of the great surgeon was useful to him, in affording him the opportunity of learning to perform simple surgical operations, to dress wounds, and to apply medical remedies. The knowledge thus gained, through the kindness and aptitude for teaching of his host, proved to be of great use to Oberlin in after years, in the large district of which he became the "father," at a time when there were no cantonal doctors. Oberlin's residence in the house of M. Ziegenhagen did not end altogether happily. In his own private records at that time we find him accusing himself of an excess of "vivacity," impatience, even of rage, when provoked. His biographers allude significantly to the fact of Madame Ziegenhagen having been a "too indulgent mother;" she interfered between her children and their preceptor, to the disgust of the latter, and to the deterioration of the discipline which he desired to enforce. There were scenes—painful to the proud and independent soul of the young tutor.

Very few words suffice to indicate the elements at work which conspired to form Oberlin's resolution to make his escape at the earliest opportunity. His most cautious and admiring biographer says of him:—"It was always difficult for him not to transgress the bounds marked out for one in a subaltern position; he was made to command, not to obey." Yet it is

those who have learned most fully to conquer themselves in the hard lessons of submissive and law-abiding obedience, who prove the best and safest leaders of others; and so Oberlin discovered, in the prolonged conflict with the promptings of his own strong will, which often struggled against the sternness of life's discipline in little things, wherein gentleness and humility are called for.

At this period of his life, self-knowledge seems to have been granted to him in a manner and degree which sometimes caused depression of spirit, and called forth expressions of dismay and self-condemnation which have made some believe that there were serious disorders in his youth, of which, in truth, he happily was entirely guiltless. The cry, "Oh, miserable man that I am," arises from the convicted and enlightened soul concerning whatever sin is by it perceived, latent or active; sins of the spirit, pride, ambition, and self-will, as much as sins of the flesh.

Oberlin left the house of M. Ziegenhagen (who continued ever to be his friend) in 1765, and hired a little room. He was not in a mood to return to his family; he wished never again to be a charge to them, and his love of independence drove him even to prefer solitude to the social atmosphere of his home, where he would have been obliged to conform, to some extent, to the hours and manner of living of other persons. Here, alone with his pride, he had some sharp spiritual experience, strongly tinctured with melancholy, sometimes taking a distinctly morbid direction. Like Marcus Aurelius, he began to keep a

book of "reflections on oneself," a "Tagbuch," in which he recorded all his most secret thoughts, criticised his daily actions, and scrutinised his motives.

What wonder that an insupportable sadness and longing for death began to lay hold of the poor young soul? The healthiest, happiest mind, impressed as his was with the thought of the Divine perfection to which he was required to attain, must soon have quailed at the view revealed of its own shortcomings, littleness, emptiness, and misery. He had yet to learn the full meaning of the "glorious liberty of the children of God." His spirit was too much enchained by self-contemplation to be able as yet, by a steady gaze at Him who is our righteousness and our strength, to be changed into the adored image and to be able to reflect it.

About this time his favourite brother died. This event deepened his melancholy. He began to pray for death. His condition of mind at that time is indicated by such passages as the following from his private diary:—"Ah! Lord Jesus, when will the hour come for me to depart and be with Thee? Wilt Thou not give a charge to some of Thine angels, the heavenly ministers, to come for me? Wilt Thou not say to them, 'Up! shall we not go forth and bring home this child of mine, Frederic Oberlin, who is consumed with the ardent desire to leave his earthly life?'"

During this time he solaced some of his darker moments by making a collection of objects of natural history. This was the nucleus of his cabinet, to which he afterwards devoted much care, and of which he

made great use in illustrating his lessons to his children and scholars at Waldbach.

In 1767, he was offered the post of chaplain to a French regiment. This proposition rekindled in him at first the military ardour of his childhood. His father advised him not to reject the offer, declaring himself ready to procure for him all the necessary technical instruction at his own expense; but Oberlin, though attracted by the prospect, hesitated. "Is this what God wills for me?" he asked himself.

While the matter remained unsettled, he assured his father that should he hear of any widowed mother whose only son was about to be taken away for military service, he would at once decide to become a soldier to take the place of the widow's stay and support. While contemplating this prospect, and believing that in his connection with the army he would be thrown into the company of young officers whose practice it was to scoff at religion, and to affect the language of Voltaire, Oberlin determined to master the sceptical works of the period. He read the writings of Diderot, Holbach, Lamettrie, and Voltaire, so that he might be able to understand and combat the arguments of the enemies of the Christian faith.

While thus engaged, a circumstance occurred which decided his fate, and gave another direction to his thoughts. He received a visit from J. G. Stuber, the pastor of Waldbach, in the Ban de la Roche. This good man, who had been invited to take charge of a parish in Strasbourg, was anxiously looking around for a man fitted to be his successor in the unenvied

sphere of labour which he had just left. For this he felt he must secure a man of real apostolic zeal, free from all self-seeking, energetic and enlightened, so that he might carry on the work of civilisation as well as of evangelisation for which he himself, with great toil, had but cleared the ground. Stuber had heard some report of Oberlin, and determined to see him and judge for himself. He found his humble lodging, climbed up a long narrow staircase, and entered a garret. On opening the door, his eyes fell first on a small bed at the end of the room, hung with curtains made of pieces of brown paper.

"This looks like the style of the Ban de la Roche," he said to himself. Oberlin was reclining, suffering from an attack of toothache. Stuber came to his side, introduced himself, and rallied him on the elegance of his curtains. "And what is this?" he asked, "this iron pan suspended over your lamp on the table?" "That is my kitchen," said Oberlin; "I dine with my parents, who allow me to bring away with me each time a lump of bread. At eight o'clock in the evening I put the bread in this pan, with a little salt; I pour some water on it; then I put my lamp under it, and continue my studies. If, towards ten or eleven o'clock I feel hungry, I then eat the soup which I have made in this way, and I can tell you I find it very delicious food." "You are the man I am seeking," said Stuber, laughing. He then sat down and explained to Oberlin the motive of his visit. Oberlin joyfully accepted his proposal, conscientiously, however, insisting that every one of the other theolo-

gical students of the university should first be asked if he did not desire the charge for himself; an unnecessary piece of courtesy, it seemed, for no one desired a banishment among the rude mountaineers of the Ban de la Roche. Having satisfied his mind on this point, he went forth with Stuber to look at his future home. He was touched and attracted by the primitive look of the inhabitants, by the evidence of the good already done by Stuber, and still more by the immense amount which remained to be done.

Oberlin was invested with this cure in April, 1767, by M. de Voyer d'Argenson, the patron of the parish of Waldbach.

CHAPTER III.

BAN DE LA ROCHE—PATOIS—WITCHCRAFT—RELIGION—PAPELLIER—MARMET—RAYOT—STUBER AND THE SCHOOLMASTER—EDUCATION AND MUSIC—VISITS OBERLIN'S GARRET—OBERLIN SAVED BY A WAGGONER—BEGINS WORK—IMPROVES THE POTATO CULTURE—ROADMAKING—BUILDS BRIDGE OVER THE BRUCHE—INTRODUCES AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS—FRUIT TREES—CULTURE OF FLAX.

IT may be interesting to go back a little and trace the history of Oberlin's new sphere of labour. The inhabitants of the Ban de la Roche appear, as their names indicate, to have been immigrants from Switzerland, Italy, France, and Germany, driven by various circumstances to this ungenial spot. The patois they spoke also indicates an admixture of the language of each of these countries, French largely predominating. It formed almost a distinct language, and the mountaineers for many generations could speak none other.

Grammars and dictionaries of the language exist. Oberlin and his predecessor studied it thoroughly, but Oberlin conceived so profound a disgust for it, looking upon it as a barbarism, that he made it a rule in his schools that no child should speak a word of patois, having once learned to speak French, and thus

the rude mountain tongue died out. The following conversation may give some little notion to readers of French, of the nature of that patois:—"Bonon djo, monsieu. Dj'vos lo soite de to mo Kieuah (Je vous le souhaite de tout mon cœur). Comme a ce qué vo vo pouté? Bin, Diu merci, e vos, monsieu, comme a ce qui vo vé? Comment que vote père e vote mère se portont? I's portont bin, achtant qu 'dj 'eu sais. E les effans, é vo touto lé monason? (maison). Il so totes é bononne santé, grèce é Diu."

The inhabitants of this borderland were frequently vexed by the passing through of hostile armies. Whole families, it is related, were often obliged to hide for weeks together in the depths of the forests to avoid the violence of marauders. The march over the mountains by an Austrian army, in 1744, almost depopulated the district. Superstition prevailed as a matter of course among these simple people, and for some time a terrible social tyranny was the result, for when any misfortune or accident occurred, it was attributed to the agency of witchcraft.

There is a spot between Waldbach and Wildersbach which was the scene of the execution of a great number of unfortunate beings who were suspected of practising witchcraft. The Prince of Veldence, in the beginning of the eighteenth century, was lord of the manor. Finding it difficult to believe the reports he heard of the large number of sorcerers existing among this poor, scattered population, he went to inquire for himself. He succeeded eventually in curing the people of their belief in, and cruel dread of witchcraft,

by the following stratagem—a stratagem worthy of the barbarous spirit of his times. He went into his own stables at midnight, and broke the leg of one of his horses by the blow of a heavy log of wood. In the morning he accused one of his valets of having done the deed by sorcery, and put the poor fellow to the torture or "question." The valet declared in his agony that he had indeed, by sorcery, broken the horse's leg. The prince, calling the people together, related to them, with loud laughter, the true story, and pointed out to them how surely many persons, as innocent as his valet, must have been unjustly accused, tortured, and executed. He then proceeded to put to the question the public executioner, a malevolent man, who had been ever ready to receive and promptly act upon every spiteful or ignorant accusation. This man confessed that he believed he had put to death more than seventy innocent persons. After this time, the accusations of and executions for witchcraft were never more heard of.

In 1709, a certain Dr. Felz introduced the cultivation of the potato into the Ban de la Roche. Previous to this, the people had used wild apples and pears in lieu of vegetables, and ate also acorns and chestnuts. The district was then one vast forest. During these times of miserable poverty and dark superstition, the light of Christian faith nevertheless shone here and there like a lamp amidst the darkness; its consoling doctrines taking a complete and powerful hold of the minds which embraced it. Of regular religious worship there was frequently none; but the mountaineers

would sometimes assemble in groups in the forests or around their huts, to listen to ardent preachings, fervent prayers, and hymns, which chiefly turned upon the nothingness of all earthly things, and expressed an ardent longing for a home in the heavens. The company of men and women who maintained this simple form of worship were called the *réveillés* (revived or revivalists); their leader, for some time, being the Pastor Pelletier.

No traditions of the religious life of the district exist of greater antiquity than the Reformation of the sixteenth century. The reformed worship, based on the system of the Confession of Augsburg, was first introduced among these mountains by one of the princes of Veldence. A little later, a number of Roman Catholic workmen were brought by M. d'Argenvillers to be employed at the forges of Rothau, and for these a church was built. The Catholic curé of the Ban de la Roche, at the time of the Reformation, was one Papellier, a man of an easy and accommodating temper, as will appear from the fact that when the Prince de Veldence ordered him to conform to the new doctrine, and to begin to conduct Divine service in accordance to it, he immediately changed his costume, and began to preach in the sense of the reformers, so far as he understood it. He was a jovial curé-pastor. At the rustic dances, he flung aside his clerical garments, and danced with all his might in the midst of the noisy troop. The reverence which his parishioners felt for him was "never carried to excess," it is said. In 1618, a little chapel was built, which

became the "mother church" of the district. A certain Nicholas Marmet became pastor in 1632. A strange mixture of old Romish mediæval, if not Pagan, superstition mingled at that time with the simple doctrines of the reformed teachers. On the altar of the little church at Fouday there had stood from time immemorial a quaint, ugly, little head of St. John the Baptist, carved in wood. It was the custom of the women on entering the church to kiss their hands and incline their heads to this poor image. Marmet, sick of this foolish piece of idol worship, caused the wooden head to be removed. The moment the women saw that the object of their adoration had disappeared, they suspected their pastor; and, full of zeal and vengeance, they attacked the humble pastoral cabin, dragged Marmet forth, and were on the point of throwing him into the surging waters of the Bruche, when some men cutting wood in the forests intervened, and saved the pastor from the hands of the furies.

Although calling themselves Protestants, the villagers continued for a long time to make pilgrimages to the Mount of St. John, a religious act said to possess a healing power for weak eyes and blindness.

Marmet was a devoted evangelist, and many times he was in peril of losing his life among the snows, or from robbers, who frequently invaded his house and carried off his little all. The first ecclesiastical inspection known in the district took place during his ministry. The replies of Marmet to the questions of the inspector are naïve. He complained of the habit his parishioners had of sleeping in church; also that there was

no schoolmaster in the place, which obliged him to remain himself all day among the children.

Marmet laboured on in this ungracious field for many years. When at last the poor old man, racked with rheumatism and fever, could no longer leave his village, and when pestilence, war, and famine, had gathered in a doleful harvest of his people, his life became so desolate and lonely that he no longer remembered the day of the week, and inwardly sighed for death. He sometimes made a guess as to the return of the Sunday; but wishing to be more secure, he hit on the plan of making himself a calendar of an original sort. He made seven brooms of heather, and placed them in a row against the wall, taking away one each day, and so commencing the week again by replacing the brooms, and beginning over again.

Marmet was followed by the good Pelletier, a man of fervent and sincere piety, and the promoter of the revivals mentioned above. A hymn composed by him is still sung in the Ban de la Roche. After him came Rayot, remembered only for his persecution of the persons and families who had been most attached to Pelletier, and who ultimately, on account of certain scandals, was forced to fly from his parish and from the country. This pastor loved the chase. Having been summoned one day to the bedside of a dying parishioner, a hare crossed his path, upon which he ran home for his gun, and began climbing the steeps in pursuit of the game, shouting to the relative of the dying man (who "found his pastor's conduct very unchristian"), "The sick man can wait; the hare won't."

At last we come to the good J. G. Stuber, the immediate predecessor of Oberlin, who entered on his charge at the Ban de la Roche at twenty-eight years of age, in 1750. There is a tablet to the memory of Stuber's wife in the modest church at Waldbach. The epitaph is as follows:—"Marguerite Salome, daughter of M. T. J. Reuchlin, Professor of Theology and Canon of Strasbourg, wife of J. George Stuber, minister of this parish. She lived a life of peaceful innocence and great happiness for three years, at the Ban de la Roche. The birth of her first child was the close of her own beautiful youth, at twenty years of age." Madame Oberlin, therefore, was not the first refined and beautiful lady who had adorned this rugged retreat by her gracious presence. Stuber worked very hard, and the result of his pioneering efforts was the bringing of the Ban de la Roche out of an absolutely wilderness condition into that very modified approach to civilisation in which Oberlin found it. His first act on arriving in the district was to inquire for and find the school, or what was by courtesy called the school. Having reached by rugged ways the educational centre of the valleys, he was directed to the dirtiest of huts, in which, on entering, he found a little troop of half-dressed, unwashed children, squatted upon the mud floor, doing nothing whatever. The schoolmaster, a paralysed old man, was lying upon a squalid pallet in the corner. "Are you the schoolmaster of this locality?" asked Stuber in astonishment. "Yes, sir." "What do you teach the children confided to you?" "Nothing at all, sir," was the reply. "Why do you

teach them nothing?" "Because I know nothing myself, sir." "And how, then, did you come to be appointed schoolmaster in this place?" "Alas, sir," replied the poor old cripple, "I was for a long time pig-keeper at Waldersbach; but when, on account of my age and infirmities, I could no longer keep the pigs, not knowing what to do with me, they put me to keep the children."

There was evidently a good deal to be done here, and Stuber set himself to the work. He began by collecting a little money in order to build a small schoolhouse; a primitive schoolhouse it was, of wood chiefly. He went first with his request to the Abbé de Règemorte, a man of much local dignity. The abbé declined to listen to the request of the miserable little pastor of the Augsburg Confession. "Give me leave then, at least," said Stuber, "to go round among the good people in your parish who care for the young, and to ask of them a little money." "That is not my affair," replied the abbé; "you can try them." "Then permit me, sir, to begin with yourself," said Stuber, standing entreatingly before him, and holding out his hat to receive the hoped-for coin. The abbé, touched by his simplicity and confidence, granted him all that he asked. Stuber sent to Bâle for fifty Bibles, which became the nucleus of the parish library. He proceeded then to make an alphabet—a little book which he caused to be printed, entitled, "Methodical Alphabet to facilitate the Art of Spelling and Reading in French." He endeavoured to begin something like a normal school to train a few of the more intelligent of the population as teachers. "I

gave up," he said, "the ordinary manner of preaching, and, abstaining from all rhetoric, I addressed the people in a tone of friendly conversation. I varied frequently our method of worship, in order not to allow habits of formal routine to become engrained in the poor people, but rather to render the religious service animated, simple, and spontaneous."

Ancient history having brought to him beautiful stories of the miracles wrought by music, Stuber cultivated such musical taste in his parishioners as he could elicit. He taught the children to sing, he himself accompanying or leading on the violin. He even attained to the instructing of a few of the men in singing the bass of the melodies sung in the church. The women then came forward themselves to learn, and to be added to the number of choristers. "It was always a great delight to me," said Stuber, "in riding my horse from one village to another, to hear in the fields and among the heights the melodies which I had taught. I could often distinguish very beautiful and harmonious voices."

These high and kindly motives were, however, at times suspected; distrust, superstition, and idleness, were his worst opponents. The "methodical alphabet" was looked upon by some as a sort of Sibylline leaf, or as having to do with witchcraft, so much so, that one of Stuber's schoolmasters consulted him as to the manner in which he ought to reply to a man who had serious doubts concerning the little book, and remarked to him that the children were taught far other things than those which they formerly knew, and

indeed dangerous things; "What does this mean?" the man asked. "Is there another God than the one we formerly knew?" "Reply to him," said Stuber, "Yes; formerly you worshipped the god of darkness, now we are trying to show you the God of Light."

The barbarous names which the people were in the habit of giving their children shocked the Christian soul and musical ear of the pastor. He thought to set a better example by naming his own children from the Christian virtues. His two daughters, (for he married a second wife,) were Concord and Charity. Charity died. It is said that a poor beggar man, coming to the door one day, asked for charity. Concord, looking sadly at him, and thinking only of her sister, replied, "Alas, poor man! Charity is dead."

Worn out by arduous labour, Stuber retired from this rude mountain home, and purposed to close his life in comparative repose at Strasbourg. His successor, however, was so little able to meet the requirements of that needy and unenviable charge, that Stuber felt it his duty to return to his post. After some years more of labour, he again determined to retire, and applied himself with assiduity and much prayer to the discovery of a man fitted for the post he was leaving. We have seen how his steps were providentially directed towards Oberlin's garret.

While Oberlin was still a student of theology, and was preparing for his future charge, he was travelling on one occasion from Strasbourg to the Ban de la Roche. The long journey was performed on foot. It was in the winter time; deep snow covered the road.

which was almost impassable. He had reached the middle of the journey, and was already among the mountains; but by this time he had become so exhausted that he could not stand up any longer. He dropped on the snow, sleep overcame him, all power to resist it left him, and he was rapidly freezing to death. He commended himself to God, and yielded to what he believed to be the sleep of death. He knew not how long he had lain there, but suddenly he became conscious of some one taking him by the arm and raising him up. Before him stood a waggoner in a blue blouse; his waggon was at a little distance on the road. This man gave him a little wine and food, and vitality returned to him; he then bore him in his arms to his waggon, and brought him safely to the nearest village. The rescued man was profuse in his thanks, and with some hesitation offered money, which his benefactor declined, saying, "It is our duty to help one another, and it is almost an insult to offer a reward for such a service." Then Oberlin replied, "Tell me at least your name, that I may ever have you in thankful remembrance before God." "I think," said the waggoner, "you are a minister of the Gospel. Tell *me*, therefore, as you are probably learned, the name of the Good Samaritan." Oberlin replied, "I cannot do that, for his name is not on record in the Bible." "Then," replied the man, "until you can tell me the name of the Good Samaritan, permit me to withhold mine." He quickly drove out of sight, and Oberlin never saw him again, nor could he by any inquiries ever learn the name of his benefactor.

Oberlin was installed in his new cure on the 7th April, 1767. His home was grandly named the Presbytère. It was a poor broken-down cottage of one story, with three or four rooms, and a bit of garden in front, a few feet square. He lost no time in beginning to make the acquaintance of his parishioners. He was dismayed at the evidence of the extreme poverty which existed in the valleys. One of the more respectable of the inhabitants, who had ten children, was too poor to purchase more than half that number of pairs of *sabots*, and the children were obliged to wear them in turns, the others meanwhile going barefooted. The chief food of the poorest people was grass boiled in milk. In the course of one of his walks, Oberlin saw a poor widow sitting at the door of her hut; he entered into conversation with her, and on leaving, he drew from his pocket a penny, and with some hesitation asked her acceptance of it. To his surprise her whole countenance lightened up with joy, and though paralysed, she managed to rise to her feet and grasped his hand with both hers. "Ah!" she said, "what happiness! I am quite ill with the poor roots upon which I am obliged to live, and this will enable me to buy bread for several days." On another occasion, visiting a poor woman, she pointed out to him laughingly a certain plant near the door, saying: "This plant, sir, is my master; it has beaten me." "How is that?" he asked. She replied: "There is scarcely a plant in the place which has not served me for nourishment at one time or another; but this is so terribly bitter, that I cannot manage to eat it, cook it as I will."

The potato, which had been introduced into the valleys by a former pastor, had become of so impoverished a type that it was scarcely eatable at this time, and, through the want of proper cultivation, it was becoming extremely scarce. Oberlin sent for several new kinds to Switzerland, Holland, and Lorraine, and taught the people the scientific culture necessary for keeping up the quality and quantity of the crop. The sandy soil of the valleys suited well this plant; and it soon became so productive, that Oberlin's next thought was to open up communication between the Ban de la Roche and the world outside, in order that the poor mountaineers might take their surplus vegetables to the Strasbourg market. Ambitious dreams of future commerce, nay, even of manufactures for the valleys, now took possession of the brain of this practical reformer, and never abandoned him until they were converted into realities.

During the winter months, the people of the Ban were unable often to pass even from one of their villages to another. The melting snows produced serious landslips, which blocked the roads. Oberlin's first work was to make embankments of stone, in order to strengthen the roads, and weirs to turn the force of the river wherever its floodings invaded the path. He instructed the people in the method of road-making best adapted to rude climates,—that of raising them in the middle. He himself was in every case the head workman; he was clever with his pick-axe, and always chose the most difficult or dangerous portion of the ground for his position, often returning

home with his hands cut and his clothes torn in the conflict with sharp intruding rocks and embarrassing underwood of bramble and thorn. At first, suspicion, dislike of innovation, and indolence held back his ignorant fellow-workers. But it gradually dawned upon even the most stupid, that to have an even footway all through the year for themselves and their beasts would be a clear advantage. Gradually they gathered to the rescue, and came forward, touching the tools suspiciously at first, and then awkwardly, and with mutual jeers and laughter, experimenting in the use of them. Soon, therefore, it became necessary to procure tools for the clamorous candidates for a share in the honour of the work. This was done, and shortly Oberlin appeared as the overseer of a large band of busy road-engineers, riding his good horse from point to point, and giving his orders with vivacity, precision, and good humour. His presence began obviously to excite enthusiasm. Like all men of master minds, he exercised a kind of electrical influence on those who set themselves to carry out his projects.

Having completed the internal road-making work, and the most needful restraints in the form of dykes for the impetuous Bruche, Oberlin now set himself to the far more difficult task of opening the gates of this desert, which until now had been barred by rugged boulders and crooked passes, which almost excluded it from communication with the outer world. It was necessary to have an easy communication with the Strasbourg high-road. The difficulties were serious.

Money again was wanted. Oberlin directed his petition this time to the Prince of Salm, who he believed would appreciate the importance of such a civilising enterprise, and through a portion of whose territory the new road must necessarily be carried. He was not disappointed. Blasting operations were now commenced. The awe of the Ban de la Rochois was great on seeing large pieces of rock leap into the air with a report like thunder. Other stubborn pieces of rock or embedded boulders had to be removed by strong united efforts, and gradually rolled down the sides of the hills to the valleys, where sometimes they were broken up for building, or, if large enough, were capped by the women with a little covering of soil, on which they planted their potatoes. This high-road out of the valleys made slow but steady progress, the work stimulating the intelligence as well as the activities of the people in no small degree. Now aqueducts and covered ways had to be made in the pass; these latter were built of solid stone, crossing in a slanting direction from rock to rock over the road, to protect passengers in winter from falling avalanches, and mountain streams flushed by melting snows in spring. The people comprehended at once the utility of these covered ways on hearing the matter explained by Oberlin. Many eyes gleamed with intelligent appreciation, and many hands were offered for this new portion of the work. It was a day of great rejoicing and acclamation when the new road was declared open, and communication free between Strasbourg and the mountain desert. The

engineer-pastor was able to speak with much effect to his assembled people, on the following Sunday, of the power of faith in "moving mountains"; for, had they not seen with their eyes the rocks uprooted, and the mountain ways becoming obedient to the faith and will of their leader? Yes, they understood perfectly that man can accomplish great things when, with prayer and faith, he engages on any enterprise for the good of his fellows. Oberlin had begged first of God, and then of man, the resources which he needed for the completion of this work. He had paid off all his workmen, and returned on Saturday evening to his Presbytère with a light heart; although of his accommodation at that time he wrote:—"I lived then in a decayed old house, where I endured much inconvenience and loss from the depredations of rats, and from the rains which soaked in perpetually; but I did not wish to house myself better until I had accomplished certain needful works, and especially until there were decent schools erected."

Soon after this, the exportation of potatoes began; but for the continued effectual cultivation of this and other plants, exportable also at a later period, the state of the valleys and hillsides must be attended to. Oberlin said, "It was only after much explanation and entreaty that my people began to consent to the making of bridges." Their only idea of a bridge hitherto had been an old tree trunk laid across the stream, which was only available in summer when the waters were low. One of the roads from village to village passed over a height difficult to ascend and

descend. For greater facility of communication, the poor people had hammered out with their feet, for some generations past, a bad path, which compelled them to cross the Bruche, but which shortened the way. In winter this crossing was accomplished upon the trunk of a tree thrown from rock to rock in mid-air, at a giddy height above the stream.

This bridge was generally moist and slippery from the spray of the river. Frequent accidents occurred. In the darkness of the night passengers slipped and were drowned or beaten to death against the rocks. A day or two of wailing followed each such tragedy, but, until now, no attempt to remove the cause of the accidents, or provide a better path. Oberlin, meditating on this scene of so many deaths, determined to have at this spot a solid stone bridge, fitted alike for waggon traffic and foot passengers. He was obliged to begin by buying the ground, and in order to do this, to collect again a sum of money. This solid bridge, well called the Pont de la Charité, which he succeeded in building, remains to this day an excellent memorial of Oberlin's benevolence and engineering enterprise.

The next task was that of ameliorating the impoverished soil of the valleys. The following is condensed from a letter written by M. Le Grand, as an appendix to a report sent by him to the Royal Agricultural Society of France. He says that the poor villagers had frequently poisoned themselves in their hungry search for food, by preparing and eating soup made of malignant herbs. In the early days of

Oberlin's school reforms, the children were taught, besides knitting, the nature of all the plants which grew in the valleys ; specimens were laid before them, and they learned to pronounce their names first in their own patois and then in French. Those of a poisonous quality they were taught to avoid, and to labour to banish ; while they were told the use of those of an edible or harmless character. The elder pupils were made to write simple essays on agriculture, and on the management of plantations. These were corrected and learned by heart, and a strict examination was held periodically in the subject. Before he would admit any child for confirmation, Oberlin required a certificate from the parents that the child had planted carefully and successfully two young fruit trees in a locality named. It was a grand day for the children when they could bring to their pastor the first apple, pear, or plum which the successfully planted tree had yielded.

The providing of agricultural implements was a serious consideration. There were at first but few, and of inferior construction, and these were lent and borrowed from hand to hand as necessity required. Oberlin established a small magazine of these instruments, brought from Strasbourg, which he required the people to buy as they needed them, at a very low price. The payments were made gradually, as the workers sold their little potato crops or their cattle.

The small Agricultural Society of the Ban de la Roche was now formed. Oberlin invited all the proprietors of Alsace-Lorraine, with whom he had any

acquaintance, to subscribe to the formation of a fund for giving prizes for the best cattle, fruits, vegetables, etc., as well as to the most skilled cultivators. This gave a great impulse to progress. Oberlin encouraged the devoting of the fields to tillage for the growth of corn, hay, etc., in place of their being used, as hitherto, solely for the feeding of mountain sheep and other half-wild stock, which he taught the people to feed in sheds. He built byres for the cows, and encouraged the making of butter, which became later a very lucrative article of commerce with Strasbourg. The cultivation of the fields was, however, a work of great difficulty, and one which was only very slowly accomplished, owing to the rocky nature of the soil. Bands of children were employed to remove the smaller stones, while blasting was again resorted to, to get rid of the crowd of boulders strewed all along the valleys. "But," says M. Le Grand, "nothing could resist the ardent exhortations of Oberlin, supported by his example," and the people set themselves with a good will to their rugged task.

Oberlin imported largely trefoil seed from Holland, the sangfoin not finding sufficient roothold in the thin layers of soil which covered the rocks. But his chief care was directed to the planting and rearing of fruit-trees. On this subject the prejudices and indolence of the people were peculiarly hard to overcome. They were unable to grasp the idea of any prospective advantages connected with this supposed caprice of their pastor. He therefore adopted the following method of persuasion. Two fields which formed part

of his little glebe were traversed by many much-frequented footpaths. He contrived, with the aid of his man-servant, to dig trenches about five feet in depth across these fields. In these he planted young apple, pear, cherry, and plum trees. Having completed his nursery garden, he awaited with patience the time when his parishioners, daily passing and repassing, should see the ripening fruits, and begin to desire such results for themselves. He was not disappointed ; the tempting fruits taught a more effectual lesson than any didactic reasonings, and the enthusiasm for fruit-tree planting, pruning, and engrafting, became universal, and in time resulted in a fruit-harvest sufficient to justify the transport of a portion to the Strasbourg and other markets, with solid advantage to the Ban de la Rochois.

Lastly, with a view to future manufactures, Oberlin introduced the cultivation of flax, preparing carefully in advance a suitable soil, composed in part of ashes and the debris of burnt wood. He sent for flax seed of the best quality from Riga, and brought to a high perfection the cultivation of this plant. The little Agricultural Society of the valleys finally won a place of renown among similar societies in France.

CHAPTER IV.

NEW SCHOOLS—EXCESSIVE ORGANISATION—WISE LETTER FROM STUBER—TURBULENT VILLAGERS—NICOLAS, THE RIVAL PREACHER—MATRIMONIAL PLANS—VISIT OF MADELAINE WITTER—SERMON AGAINST DRESS—PROPOSES AND IS ACCEPTED—HAPPY WEDDED LIFE—A ROUGH JOURNEY—LOUISE SCHEPPLER—CATHERINE SCHEIDECKER—SUNDAY IN BAN DE LA ROCHE—PUBLIC WORSHIP—OBERLIN'S WISE TREATMENT OF ROMANISTS.

THE reforms thus briefly recorded in the material condition of the Ban de la Roche were only accomplished by patient efforts extending over many years. During all that time Oberlin grappled with the still harder task of enlightening the souls and informing the minds of his parishioners. We must go back a little in order to note the beginning and gradual progress of this latter work.

We have seen what the principal school of the district was in Stuber's time. When Oberlin arrived he found the slight schoolhouse erected by his predecessor falling to pieces, "a miserable barrack, which every storm threatened with destruction." Oberlin set himself with all his might to the task of organising schools all through the district, begging the necessary funds, and sometimes aided spontaneously by neighbouring nobles who had marked his assiduity and success.

Very soon a "beautiful schoolhouse" was built at Waldbach. Until this was accomplished, Oberlin continued himself to inhabit his wretched manse, "tormented by rats," and invaded by snow and rain, which sometimes "dripped even upon his bed." He constructed with his own hands the first benches and tables which were used in the school. At Bellefosse, two years later, he achieved the erection of another schoolhouse. This was a work of difficulty, the stones for the building having to be conveyed by the peasants from the district of Senones, over the most rugged mountain paths. The humble folk of Bellefosse, however, learning to appreciate their pastor's good motives, put their hands to the work with spirit and perseverance. The Ban de la Rochois had not yet conceived of the possibility of contributing a little out of their own small means, and Oberlin was careful not to appear to expect it. His joy was great when he, one day, received the first spontaneous contribution towards the work—1 franc 20 cents.—from a widow of Bellefosse. The schoolhouse at Belmont was built five years later. The excellent Prefect of the Lower Rhine, M. de Lezay-Marnesia, a friend of Oberlin, finally took upon himself the expense of the erection of a schoolhouse at Fonday, while one at Sollbach was built by Martin Bernard, mayor of the commune.

Oberlin's extreme love of order and method ran into extravagance in his minute organisation of the education of the district during the first years of his ministry. The enumeration of his elaborate rules, and of the groups, degrees, titles, companies, sentinels,

captains, generals, etc., which he instituted, and of the various kinds of educational drill which he imposed, would be a tedious and unprofitable task. Apparently nature had fitted him in some respects for the profession of his earliest choice—the army. The carrying out of this elaborate drill, however, only filled his own soul with the sense of increasing petty worry, and had no markedly good effect on the people. His wise, kind friend, M. Stuber, continued for a few years to observe without comment the conduct of his revered friend, and at the right moment appears, on more occasions than one, at the elbow of the impetuous, method-loving young reformer, with words of strong common-sense and gentle warning.

Not only in educational matters, but in the deeper concerns of the soul, the character of the drill-sergeant in Oberlin threatened at first to mar his usefulness. Stuber counselled a little "wholesome letting alone" of the people in respect of those things in which adult persons desire, or ought to desire, to judge and act for themselves.

The following extracts from a letter written by Stuber to Oberlin are well worthy to be recorded as a model of gentleness and wisdom on the part of an aged man counselling a younger worker in the ministry. He begins by assuring his friend that he himself had made many more mistakes than his successor was likely to make :—

"Do not, my dear friend, imagine that I could have done anything better than you have done it. God alone can enable either of us to do just so much as He pleases, and no more.

The little experience to which it cost me long years of labour and difficulty to attain, you will acquire much more rapidly. . . . If it was God's will that any scheme of mine should succeed, He caused the heads of the parish to listen to me when I least expected it; and, on the other hand, He sometimes permitted the plans upon which I had most of all set my hopes of success, and taken the most pains to carry out, to become of no avail."

After enjoining his friend to seek success from the Divine blessing alone, and to watch and wait for that blessing in a spirit of self-distrust, patience, and humility, he continues :—

"Only trust everything to God, and pray for the blessing which He alone can bestow. You have more influence over men than I ever had; and this, provided you fear no one but God, and *guard against forming too many schemes*, will render you far more useful than I have been. But suffer me to remind you that it is possible, even when earnestly labouring in good works, to depart from spiritual Christianity; and I would, in this matter, urge you to maintain a constant guard over yourself. You have been brought under the influence of religion, and, as it is commonly expressed, converted to God; but without constant prayer, and the most watchful habit of mind, there is danger that you may again fall into a lifeless state; the more so on account of your being so incessantly occupied in the prosecution of your favourite schemes, and being somewhat isolated in respect of Christian society. Even though busily employed in promoting the well-being of your fellow-creatures, you may become cold and formal in your religious exercises, and less devoted to the service of God. From my inmost heart, therefore, I exhort you, my dear friend, to be always fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, living only to and for Him. Thus alone you will be able to overcome difficulties; thus alone will you find comfort and peace. He will protect, guide, and bless you, and your work will prosper, not perhaps in the exact manner which you design, but in the way which He has purposed. . . .

"I have no other motive in thus writing to you than your own good. I wish you to understand that this is literally my only

object in speaking thus plainly. I speak frankly to you, because I know our hearts are closely united, and because I have often observed with deep concern the dangers incident to young, active minds,—the coldness which sometimes supersedes the first fervour of religious feeling, the self-sufficiency concerning what they have effected, and too great a tendency to become wholly absorbed in even praiseworthy and benevolent pursuits. This is the motive which prompts me, once for all, to warn you on this point; for the heart of man is deceitful, and naturally tends to earth, if not constantly drawn upwards.

"There are two things to which I would particularly entreat your attention—namely, prayer and the study of the Holy Scriptures. I find it necessary to have constant recourse to these, in order to keep up habitual communion with God, and to fan the fire of the Christian faith in my own breast. . . .—Yours, my dear friend in the bonds of Christian love,

"G. STUBER."

Could anything be more directly applicable to Christian workers in our day, than the above advice from this wise, faithful, and tender-hearted servant of God?

In our own busy and exciting times, when competition (even in good works) is apt to distract and disturb the heart and the brain of the followers of Christ, to the detriment of calmness and depth, we all require to be reminded of the one and only source of true life and power. Our young, hard-worked ministers and many other Christian workers, both old and young, engaged in the multitudinous active duties which they are required in these days to fulfil to the last tittle, and in favour of which they too often postpone even the work of waiting upon God, know by bitter experience the deadening effect on the soul of the enforced whirl of active engagements—benevolent,

pious, and laudable as these may be. But by whom are these claims enforced, to the disadvantage of the spiritual life? By the tyrant Society—even Christian society, which can in its turn become tyrannical. It would be better to rebel somewhat against this tyranny, to resist the pressure of *over*-work, and to determine to be often alone with God, even if our hours with Him appeared to rob earth of a small particle of our poor services. Bernard of Clairvaux, when engaged in a correspondence with persons and orders throughout the whole of Europe, battling single-handed with an amount of work which might overwhelm any modern Secretary of State, found that on the days when he spent the most time in prayer and in listening to the voice of God and the teachings of the Spirit, his letters were the most rapidly written and persuasive, and his active work the most promptly and successfully accomplished. His many schemes, evolved from his own ingenious brain, widened into or were lost in the far greater plan and purpose of God; anxiety was allayed; power—the power of the Holy Spirit to which he had opened his heart—flowed forth, and was felt in every word he wrote or spoke, and in his very presence and looks.

That the counsels of Stuber were not lost on Oberlin is apparent from his growth in the spiritual life, and the increased power of his ministry as years went on.

During the first years of his ministry a great conflict arose, outward and visible, between the powers of good and evil. There were among the valleys a certain number of young men, and others of mature age,

given up to a life of idleness, marauding, violence, and vice. They were the terror and scourge of the country. These persons, first with the half-unconscious instincts of the *mauvais sujet*, and then with determined brutal purpose, leagued themselves against the new pastor and his reforms. His rigid morality was distasteful to them; they preferred to remain savages and brigands, as their fathers were. All the tact and firmness possessed by Oberlin were called out in the battle with these turbulent spirits. It will be interesting to give in his own words some account of his dealings with them:—

"I had at Waldbach an excellent fellow-worker, an elder of the Church, named George Claude, a man full of zeal for the salvation of souls. On the eve of one of the Church festivals, which were always the occasion of a riot among these disorderly young men, Claude came to me to entreat me to speak to the people on the terrors of the last judgment. '*Ihnen die Hölle recht heis zu machen*' ('Stir up well for them the flames of hell'), said he. I promised him I would; and I kept my word, speaking, as I thought, in the most terrifying manner. It was a Sunday, and I waited in expectation that that night all would be tranquil, after my strong denunciations and threatenings. Nothing of the kind! It was the custom of these disorderly persons to roam the country the whole of Saturday night till Sunday, and of Sunday night until Monday. They went from one hill-top to another, howling and yelling like a herd of wild beasts. On a former occasion, hoping to quell this disturbance, I had mounted my horse and ridden up to them. When I had succeeded in riding into the midst of them, I spoke to them kindly; I refrained from giving them a long admonition, but merely said, 'My friends, it is late; it is time to go to bed.' For my dear Ban de la Rochois are completely French in character, and consequently they require to be treated with a kind of nobility and generosity, to which they are very open and sensitive. They retired on my

addressing them thus. On another occasion, I learned that they had said to each other, 'Our minister has too much fire: the next time he comes near us, we will drag him through the nearest pond, to cool his zeal.' Some of them having entered the church from curiosity the following Sunday, I said to them from the pulpit: 'My friends, I understand you have a desire to throw me into a pond; now, I perceive that you do not know my horse, if you imagine that it would be possible for you to overtake him. But I wish to tell you that, in order to make it easier for you, I shall leave my horse at home. In this way you are sure to succeed, for you know that I am not so fleet of foot as you are.' Accordingly, I left my horse at home the next time I traversed the valleys, and went on foot. I was quite unmolested, and reached home safely. But to return to my story: that Sunday night which I imagined would be so tranquil, was one of the most disorderly we ever experienced. The young men made a terrific noise—worse than ever before. The next morning, the good elder paid me a visit. 'Well, good sir,' he asked, 'did you hear the disturbance those creatures made last night?' 'I did, my dear George,' I replied; 'but you can bear witness that it was not my fault.' 'No,' said he, 'it is a new preacher who is to blame.' 'A new preacher! how so? Tell me what you mean.' 'Last night,' he replied, 'the boys* all went to a certain inn to drink, and found there the man Nicolas—you know him, sir—a man who is almost alway drunk, and who never entered a church in his life. They greeted him noisily, and asked him mockingly, 'Are you never going to leave off frequenting the drinking places? Do you not know what our minister said to-day about hell fire? Now, listen to what he told us!' With that they repeated to him word for word your discourse, for there were many in my parish who could with ease repeat every word of my sermons. Nicolas waited till they had ceased; then he rose and said, 'And are you simple enough to believe all that? Listen to me! you know that I am a vagabond of the first order. Supposing I had a son who should run away, and waste my resources, and plunge into a life of vice and violence; and supposing this my son were at last to return to me, and ask me to

* The term "boys," as in America, was given to idle fellows, loafers.

pardon him, do you think that I, vagabond as I am, would reject him? would I not receive him back, whatever his crimes had been?' Hereupon the audience applauded, and clapped their hands, crying, 'Bravo, preacher Nicolas! Innkeeper, bring wine, that we may drink to the health of preacher Nicolas!' Then they set to work to drink; drank till they were mad; and coming out of the inn, they made the infernal noise which we all heard."

Doubtless preacher Nicolas, even in his drunkenness had uttered a truth, a deeper and more affecting truth than the speaker had any conception of. His sermon might have concluded with the reasoning with which our Lord concluded the parable of the Unjust Judge. "If I, a vagabond," Nicolas might have said, "would pardon my criminal but repentant son, how much more will the good Father in heaven pardon all who return to Him?" But the sermon of Nicolas was no reply to the preaching of Oberlin. All rests upon the fact of the criminal son returning or not returning to the father. They forgot, in their applause of preacher Nicolas, that they themselves must fulfil the condition of the son depicted in the sermon—that they must come back to the Father.

Oberlin continues: "I now saw plainly that this way which I had adopted, at my elder's advice, was not the true way to convert any one to God. Doctors of theology may say what they please, but preacher Nicolas was right. I preached no more upon the pains of hell." Oberlin continued to warn and persuade, basing his arguments mainly on the love of Christ, and the misery of all human beings separated from God. Many of the drunken and disorderly persons above

described changed their habits, and some of them were numbered among his true converts.

Not long after the incident above recorded, Oberlin was cited to appear before the Consistory of Strasbourg, to answer to an accusation which had been brought against him of preaching against the doctrine of future punishment. His defence was a simple recital of the above facts, concluding with an account of the change of character of some of those who were formerly the pest of the district, and of the arguments and persuasions which had, under God, conduced to that change. When he had concluded his recital, the President of the Consistory rose, and said, "Assuredly, sir, you could not have done better than you have done. God be thanked that the people you have to deal with are of such a nature!" Oberlin was dismissed in peace, and returned to his home.

In 1768, at the age of twenty-eight, Oberlin married Madelaine Salome Witter. This union was supremely happy.

While still a youth, and previous to his entering on his career in the Ban de la Roche, Oberlin, in obedience to his parents, and apparently without allowing his own heart to have any voice in the matter, had made two attempts at the choice of a wife. This is perhaps the least interesting or attractive incident in his whole life. All feeling, all heart-election eliminated, he had set himself in true German fashion to look around for a young woman, who should be "virtuous, frugal, obliging," etc., and on whose prudence he could depend in the management of his house. His mother

said to him, "Take a wife." The obedient son went in search of this desirable object. His mother having indicated the young widow of a rich brewer, Oberlin called at the house with the intention of proposing matrimony; sat, hat in hand, during a few minutes of awkward silence, broken at intervals by observations on the weather, and then abruptly took leave, feeling that "God had not distinctly called him to take the rich widow as his wife." Nor does it seem that the rich widow herself felt any particular call to ally herself with the shy young student.

A little later, his parents wrung from him his consent to accept their mediation with the daughter of his former schoolmaster, and they even drew up a preliminary marriage-contract between these two young persons. Here again Oberlin's heart was wholly untouched. One young woman was to him precisely like any other, provided she were "virtuous, frugal, and obliging." He accordingly allowed this arrangement to be carried out for him, up to a certain day, when a circumstance occurred which revealed to him the utter indifference felt towards him by the young lady, who, on her part, had no higher idea of love and marriage than were consistent with passive compliance with such arrangements as her parents might make for her. Oberlin summoned courage to say to the father of the girl, "Sir, I perceive from recent occurrences that a marriage with your daughter would neither be for her happiness nor mine. Let us think no more about it."

Madame Oberlin was sadly disappointed; a *mènage* at Waldersbach without a *hausfrau* was what she

could not contemplate with equanimity, and she saw her son depart for his new home with forebodings not unmixed with gentle reproaches. A better and richer lot awaited Oberlin. One of his sisters was his companion for a short time at Waldersbach, and acted as the mistress of the poor little Presbytère. This sister one day presented herself with an open letter in her hand: "Our cousin, Madelaine Salome de Witter," she said, "has been very, very ill. The doctor recommends for her a visit to our mountains; he believes this fine air will restore her. Madelaine Salome is my friend. I have proposed that she shall come and be our guest." This announcement was received by Oberlin with an expression of displeasure, so much so that his sister was grieved. The days passed on, and still the young pastor expressed no feeling of cordiality, nor any wish to show hospitality to his city cousin.

Mlle. de Witter was the daughter of a professor of some distinction at Strasbourg. Her father had been dead some years; her mother had died more recently. The orphan, the beloved only child of her parents, continued to be cherished and indulged by all who knew her, admired in society, and surrounded by all the elegance and refinement which the easy circumstances of her parents had procured for her. She was highly instructed and cultivated, and deeply imbued with Christian principles. The impression of her, however, which her cousin had received, was that of a "grande dame." He believed her to be expensive in her habits, luxurious and fashionable in dress, and worldly in her aims and motives. He was not

glad to think that she should invade the sanctity of his sober and humble home. Her tastes must be, he thought, entirely opposed to his own ; her conversation, no doubt, would be flippant and worldly,—her very appearance and manner might even produce an effect on his people which would counteract his careful teaching and influence. When the day approached for her arrival, he moved about uneasily, perhaps even with impatient and angry thoughts, secretly resolving to treat her with reserve, and to apply himself to his external duties so sedulously as to escape as much as possible the baneful influence to which he himself might fall a victim. When the poor, pale invalid arrived, she met the somewhat stiff welcome of her cousin with frank and simple courtesy, and was conducted to the little chamber where she henceforth spent much of her time in study, or rest, or sisterly intercourse with her cousin Sophie. Oberlin found himself not at all too frequently embarrassed by her refined and graceful presence.

We have brief glimpses of the life of the three young cousins at the Presbytère, given in a memoir of Oberlin, published at Toulouse in 1854, by a writer who appears to have had some personal acquaintance with his family. "Mlle. de Witter," this writer says, "had acquired tastes and habits a little too *recherché* while under the roof of her grandmother and aunt, who were persons of a somewhat elevated position in society. Oberlin could not reconcile himself to the toilette and bearing of his cousin. For this and various other fancied reasons, he appears to have been very

unfavourably disposed towards her. There were daily disputes during meals; these disputes were sometimes exceedingly animated, and had a tendency to become personal. Madelaine frequently declared that 'she would never marry a pastor,—never!' and indeed one might believe it, for she had already refused several." And thus things went on, while Madelaine daily regained health, and strength, and gaiety of heart, the latter often expressing itself in song, as she rambled on the mountain-sides, in the full enjoyment of the pure air and brilliant sunshine of the valleys in the month of June.

Madame Oberlin paid a visit to her son at this time, and appears to have become sincerely attached to Mlle. de Witter. It was apparently with more hope than on former occasions that she now renewed her importunities with her son in favour of an early marriage, and gravely counselled him to make choice without delay of his cousin Madelaine. Alas! for the perversity of the youthful heart! This untimely intervention only strengthened Oberlin in his real or fancied disapproval of his cousin. "He did not hesitate," says his biographer, "to say openly to his mother, that, much as he honoured her opinion, he could not conceal from her that this advice was distasteful to him in the highest degree, for 'he had conceived a kind of antipathy for that young person.'" The anxious and disappointed mother took leave, and bent her steps somewhat sadly to Strasbourg, sighing to herself, "How fastidious is our Fritz! how self-willed are the young!"

The days passed on, and the time approached for Mlle. de Witter to return to Strasbourg. How it came about that on her announcement of her intended departure, Oberlin became sensible that that departure would cause a blank—a painful blank—for him, those can perhaps explain who once were young themselves! According to his biographers, "he heard a voice in his heart" which said to him that Madelaine was to be the wife of his choice. He wondered at himself, and even feared. He asked himself, "Is this madness? What is this thought which haunts me day and night?" He mounted his horse, and took a long ride, remaining away the whole day. Returning to his room, he retired at once, but not to sleep. Then he tried the discipline of a long solitary walk to the top of one of the highest mountains near. But his feelings remained unaffected by these experiments; again a night passed wholly without sleep. He rose before dawn, and falling on his knees, asked God to direct him in the present perturbation of his mind, as at all other times. Madelaine was not unobservant of his silence and change of manner. She also was silent. It was Sunday, and the cousins went to the church together. Oberlin, scarcely master of himself, was yet sufficiently so to take what must be confessed was an unfair advantage of Mlle. de Witter, by pronouncing from the pulpit a vigorous tirade against fashionable and costly dress, and against womanly weaknesses in that direction. This heroic act accomplished, he descended from the pulpit, feeling, naturally, more uncomfortable than ever.

His trouble of mind had now ripened into an irrepressible impatience to know his fate. His sister and cousin had returned home before him, and were sitting in the garden awaiting his return for the mid-day repast. He quickened his steps almost to a run, praying earnestly as he ran, "O God, give me a sign for good; if this my intention is in accordance with Thy will, make her to accept me at once, and without hesitation!" (Qu'elle accepte tout-de-suite et sans détour). It was the prayer of an ardent and impatient nature. Yet he who sought God's guiding hand in everything, found that hand directing him at all times, even while overruling his own impetuosity. Madelaine was absorbed in a book; he approached her, and began abruptly: "My dear Mlle. de Witter, I have many times hurt and vexed you, and not least this very day, by preaching against luxury in dress. I fear I am now going to displease you more than ever. Will you be my helper and companion in the cultivation of the Ban de la Roche, this still tangled garden of the Lord? But will you never try to persuade me to accept a more lucrative position than this poor parish? Will you, in fact, consent to be the wife of the poor pastor of the Ban de la Roche? If you will, then say, *Yes!* Say it quickly!" This expression of his feelings did not perhaps seem quite so sudden to Mlle. de Witter as Oberlin fancied it would. Women sometimes read looks; and silence speaks to them at times more eloquently than words. Madelaine rose, folded one of her hands over her eyes, as if to hide the blush which rose suddenly to her temples, and

placed the other in the hand of Oberlin, with the one word, "*Yes.*" There were no disputes at that day's repast. Oberlin's marriage to Madelaine de Witter took place at Strasbourg, on the 6th of July, 1768, about a month after their betrothal.

Oberlin wrote a prayer, which he and his young wife were in the habit of frequently using together. In this prayer they consecrated themselves, their household, their sphere of labour and all that belonged to them, entirely to God, through Jesus Christ. Madame Oberlin soon became the beloved friend and counsellor of the people of the Ban de la Roche. Her cultivated intelligence and singularly sound judgment in matters far beyond the domain of mere domestic economy made her a powerful aid to her husband in his arduous work of civilising and evangelising the populations of the valleys. She entered with ease, and without, apparently, a regret, into his simple and Spartan manner of life; and although naturally frail, she shared his arduous labours, and would even face with him the storms and deep snow when duty called them forth on some errand of mercy. Visiting the sick was one of the most arduous of the duties of the pastor, on account of the immense extent of his parish, some portions of which were as much as four leagues from his house at Waldbach. Occasionally, in the depth of winter, these pastoral visits were expeditions of real danger.

There is an account in Oberlin's diary, or "Annals" (p. 130), of a visit he paid in the winter of 1775 to the saw-mills of Barr, which was at the extremity of the

valleys, in order to see a young man who was dangerously ill. He writes :—

"From the summit of the Champ du Feu (the highest point of this mountain range), the beauty of the view was incomparable. A profound silence reigned everywhere. Not a breath of wind,—a rare thing with us. The mountains and valleys were clothed with a robe of dazzling white; the pine forests seemed as if powdered with fine glass; the glittering frozen snow flashed back the sun's rays in a million lights. I paused awhile. The heavens seemed so near me, or I so near to them, that my soul was filled with a sense of power and joy, and I once more made a resolution, with more hope than ever, to consecrate my whole life to the good of my fellow-men, and to walk closely in the Saviour's steps. . . . On every side nature shone with a beauty which is unknown to the summer; but while I was admiring and wondering, weariness began to seize me, while difficulties increased at every step. Sometimes the trunks of old fallen forest trees, half decayed and buried in the snow, caused me to stumble and fall; sometimes I was forced to climb down the sides of rocks covered with a thick armour of ice, or to tread cautiously along narrow paths overhanging deep precipices."

The day following, Oberlin intended to have retraced his steps by the same route, but the severity of the weather made it impossible. He was for several days, as he expressed it, "the prisoner of the snow and the winds."

Several times his life was endangered in the service of his people. There are entries in the "Annals" at different dates such as these :—"In danger of perishing in the snow, with two of my scholars, in returning from Rothau. . . . A narrow escape while crossing the bridge over the Bruche. I regained my equilibrium *through the interposition of an invisible hand.* . . . Was thrown, and dragged along the road by my horse,

which took fright." Later in the "Annals" we find: "October, 1770: We have been mercifully preserved from fire. . . . July, 1787: Our good God so mercifully directed to-day the fall of a block of limestone from a great height down the mountain-side, that it passed between me and my children and pupils, without injuring one of us."

Oberlin had set himself some years previous to his marriage to the work of erecting schools, and providing schoolmasters and mistresses in every division of his vast parish. In this work Madame Oberlin became a valuable helper. Infant schools, adult schools, sewing schools for women, and classes for special instruction in natural history and other subjects, soon followed the establishment of the regular schools. The name of Sara Baznet, of Belmont, deserves to be recorded as one of the first who offered herself as a teacher. Madame Oberlin went in search of others suitable and willing for this work, and in a short time salaried schoolmistresses were established in good rooms in every part of the valleys. There was no artificial separation of the sexes in the education of the Ban de la Roche; boys and girls were taught and trained together.

The name of Louise Scheppler is familiar to every one who has read any sketch, however slight, of the life of Oberlin. This strong, loving, devoted woman, was in the first instance the leading schoolmistress, and on the death of Madame Oberlin, she accepted the position of housekeeper at the Presbytère, and of teacher and nurse of the pastor's children. She was

a woman of great energy, wise and good, and became a friend and adviser to the family in all domestic matters, as well as a true helper in spiritual things. The rule of Louise Scheppler in her schools is thus expressed :—"She endeavours to make the children feel the presence of God at all seasons and in all places ; she exhorts them to have recourse to Him at all times, as the God of love. She inculcates in them a horror of deceit and falsehood, of disobedience, and of *a want of respect for the poor*. . . . Lastly, she endeavours to teach them what is meant by the *prayer of the heart*, by kneeling with them, and praying with them in a simple manner which they can understand." "It is chiefly owing," says M. Le Grand, "to the influence of the schoolmistresses that the children of the Ban de la Roche have that frank politeness of manner which strikes all the strangers who visit us. Little girls and boys, even down to the most infantine, salute and affectionately hold out their innocent hands to whoever passes." Sara Baznet died at the age of twenty-nine, not long after she had entered on her noble though humble career. Oberlin preached her funeral sermon from the text, "Behold me, with the children whom Thou hast given me."

Among these "sisters of providence," which was the title given to them in the district, three especially deserve to be named as fellow-workers in the civilisation of the Ban de la Roche,—Catherine Scheidecker, Marie Müller, and Sophie Bernard. The following circular-letter was addressed, in 1800, by Oberlin to the "sisters of providence."

"It is my desire that you, dear persons, who work for the instruction of our youth, should hold, from time to time, a general conference—perhaps every three months. At this conference, an inquiry should be made as to which, if any, of the pupils of the Ban de la Roche have arrived at perfection in any art in which their teachers have taken pains to instruct them, as, for instance, plain knitting, knitting with wooden needles, the knitting of *gloves with fingers*, of fishermen's gloves, or any other useful art. If there is any pupil who has attained to absolute perfection in any of these things, a certificate should be given to him or her, signed by all the members of the conference, to which I myself will add a prize.

"You well understand it will not do to be indulgent in the examinations in these arts. No harm happens to a child who is rejected as not having reached perfection. On the contrary, he will strive the more to win a prize next time.

"If through weakness we favour imperfect work, however we may deceive the child and even the public, all the good which might be attained is lost. Such favours would be a lie, and consequently criminal. It is God's will that we should follow after perfection; we are called to be imitators of God."

The Sunday was a day welcomed by all in the Ban de la Roche—a cheerful day. At the first tones of the far-sounding bell of the church at Waldbach, troops of villagers, men, women, and children, began to descend the hill-sides, some coming from châlets on the wooded heights, others crossing the valley from Fouday, and others emerging from the forests of Sollbach. Strangers and visitors often came, also, by the way of Rothau. "The church is soon crowded in every part. When Oberlin enters, all the people rise, with glad faces of greeting. His countenance is full of joy; *his very look is a benediction.*" * Oberlin

* Memoir, by Stœber.

had continued the work of his predecessor Stuber, in the cultivation of sacred music; the singing, therefore, is "correct and full of inspiration."

It is not easy, probably, to judge of Oberlin's power in preaching by the perusal of his published sermons. It is evident, however, that they were full of power and grace; for Jesus Christ was his theme, and he spoke of Him, by the power of the Holy Spirit, as of One in whom he believed and whom he loved. It was said of him, that whatever might be the special subject of his sermon on any particular day, the effect on those who heard him, of any discourse he made, long or short, was as if he had said to them the words, "I call heaven and earth to record this day . . . that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore choose life; that both thou and thy seed may live" (Deut. xxx. 19). His sermons were prepared with the greatest care. He generally wrote them out and committed them to memory; but would often change the subject or style when in the pulpit.

Oberlin's prayers dwelt in the hearts and memories of all, even more than his discourses. He offered extempore prayer generally in the church, yet often made use of suitable prayers which he had himself written, and which expressed the more special needs of his people. Prayer was to him "the source of strength, of encouragement, and of comfort, and the nurse of faith and hope; the most pressing need of the believer in his happiest as well as his most sorrowful hours; the momentary rendering back of

the spirit to Him who gave it." It was "no vain formulary, but the voice of the heart." In the closing prayer of the service of the sanctuary, he generally offered intercessions for any who were sick, for the absent, for the dying, "sometimes also for the dead," adds his biographer, who remarks, "It may be said that in the Ban de la Roche the spirits of the dead were nearer to the living than in other parts of the world. We never forget them; there is here a very living communion between the visible and the invisible world."

Oberlin reserved stated hours for private prayer during the day, at which times none, as a rule, were permitted to interrupt him. These hours came to be known to all his parishioners, and it was usual for carters or labourers, returning from the fields with talk and laughter, to uncover their heads as they passed beneath the walls of his house. If the children ran by too noisily, these working people would check them with uplifted finger, and say, "*Hush! he is praying for us.*" At times his soul was moved to an agony of intercession for his people; he travailed in birth for them. Sometimes he was in darkness on their account. His natural kindness to all, becoming, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, a constant and yearning desire for their salvation, he would spend hours on his knees, pouring out his soul in prayer for them, with "strong crying and tears." He felt the awful nature of the responsibility of one who is called to be an overseer of the flock of God, and who must give an account of the souls committed to him. "Oh,

my people, my people, my children, my friends!" he would cry in his prayers—apostrophising them, and pleading *with* them as well as for them, though he was alone with God.

Mention has been made of the offering of prayers for the dead. Biographical accuracy makes it necessary to record that Oberlin did not in all points rigidly adhere to the Protestant Confession of Faith. He was "evangelic" in the true sense of the word, living and walking by the faith of Christ crucified, and teaching in all its fulness the Gospel of our salvation; but he retained in his heart, rather than by the intellect, certain views which the English Protestant might hold to be more than fanciful—even delusive and false. These views were, however, on points of secondary importance. While of a precise and practical turn of mind, and possessing a keen good sense and powerful judgment, he was also very imaginative, and had a strong tendency to mysticism. He seemed to live very near the invisible world. After the death of his beloved wife, he believed that he received on several occasions advice and good inspiration from her. He would converse with her aloud, as he walked. "The science of colours was to him an abyss of mystery." In order to fathom it, he said, "one would require to be a good physicist and optician, a chemist, a painter, a mineralogist, and a mystic." Every pilgrim to Waldbach has had pointed out to him the curious chart made by Oberlin, framed and hung on his study wall, of coloured stones, mysteriously arranged, and possessing, at least for

him, some wonderful meaning. He believed that he could divine the characters of his friends by showing them this curious chart, and asking them which colour they liked best among the stones. The subject of magnetism interested him greatly. He procured all the books and even unpublished writings which he could find on the question. Clairvoyance also he inquired into with eager curiosity. He shared in many subjects the opinions of Lavater; and the books of Swedenborg attracted him. Such speculations, however, never absorbed him; he confessed that a feeling of doubt accompanied him in all such researches. He gathered together some of his observations and conclusions on this subject, and labelled them "*Hypothèses sur l'autre monde; Représentation hasardée.*"

His position as a Reformed pastor in France was peculiar, and should be borne in mind in judging of certain leanings which he evinced towards tenets not distinctively Protestant. He thus described it himself:—

"Our position in the Ban de la Roche is almost unique. A valley, resembling an almost imperceptible island in the midst of the ocean, our Protestant parish lies isolated, and almost cast away, as it were, in the midst of Roman Catholic communes. We hear daily around us expressions in the style used by the early fathers—by St. Augustine, for example, in his Confessions—such as *catholic* and *heretic*. Thus it happens that if we confess simply that we are not Catholics, the honest people all around us infer that we are heretics, and this gives them an almost unconquerable repugnance to us. On account of the perpetual raillery, the scornful attacks, as well as the seductions to which the Ban de la Rochois are exposed in all their relations

with our neighbours, we found it necessary to get rid of mere names which were offensive through being misunderstood. For this reason it was that I resolved to call myself, not a Protestant minister, but a *Ministre Catholique Evangelique*. We had thousands of proofs—I and my people—of the deep aversion of the surrounding Roman Catholics to all who were called Huguenots, Lutherans, Protestants, heretics. When, as it often happened, our Catholic neighbours learned to love our people, in spite of their difference of religion, on account of their good qualities and helpful friendliness, you can scarcely imagine the joy with which they received our assurance that we were also Catholics, and true Catholics—Evangelical Catholics,—in spite of all the injurious names they gave us. At the same time, it was often necessary for me, as my predecessor Stuber had done, to speak to the people from the pulpit on the dogmatic differences concerning which they were frequently attacked by the Roman Catholics.

"In connection with this, I may mention an incident which occurred. I was dining one Sunday at the little inn at Belmont (where I had gone to preach), when a Catholic bourgeois of Colroy la Roche came in to take a glass of beer. He seemed agreeably surprised to see me, held out his hand, with expressions of respect and admiration for the good which he had heard that I had done. 'But,' said he, looking at me with a confiding expression, 'I have heard it said, sir, that you preached last Sunday at Waldbach against the Catholic religion.' In fact, I had been obliged to answer some objections which had been presented to some of my people. In reply to this honest Catholic, I asked the innkeeper to hand me his Bible; I opened it, and pointed out to the Colroy gentleman the following titles: The Catholic epistle of St. James, the apostle; the Catholic epistle of St. Peter; the 1st Catholic epistle of St. John, &c. I said to him: 'You see that these Catholic epistles are in the hands of all my parishioners, and that when I ask for them here in this inn they are handed to me. How can it be believed, then, that I preach against the Catholic faith?' The young man gave a

sigh of relief, replying: 'God be praised! I have always thought, and have maintained in words, that the Pastor of Waldbach would never preach against the Catholic faith.'"

The peculiar difficulties encountered by Oberlin in this position of the minister, and adviser, and chief of a small province surrounded on every side by those of a different *culte*, called for great wisdom on his part,—nothing short of that "wisdom that is from above, which is gentle, and peaceable, and easy to be entreated." He continues in another place:—

"What would the poor and ignorant, but often sincerely pious Catholics think of us, if we accepted the name of Lutherans and Protestants? We should fail at least to win them to the Gospel, which is above all differences of nomenclature and sect. A week ago, a Catholic visited me, to ask of me a New Testament; for, as he said, since the retirement of their old curé—a good man—another had come, who insulted and persecuted the '*patriots*' who wished to swear allegiance to the nation. This curé said to them openly: 'You are schismatics, Lutherans, Protestants, *damnés!*' 'He refuses to use the holy water which we have touched, and troubles the whole parish.'"

Oberlin replied to this complaint, which was of a nature not at all uncommon at that time:—

"You know we are not Lutherans. It is Jesus Christ in whom we believe—not Luther. We do not protest against the Catholic religion. Some two hundred years ago, it was necessary for us to protest against the tyranny of the Emperor Charles V., who wished to force upon us dogmas opposed to that of the Evangelists. *Then* we were Protestants; at the present day the name has lost its signification for us. There is now no question of the dogmas of Charles V., and assuredly we shall never protest against the holy Evangelists, the Gospel, nor against the

Catholic or Christian Church. As for the terms 'schismatics' or 'heretics,' judge for yourself who most deserves the reproach implied in them—we, who believe, profess, and practise what is contained in the Catholic and Christian epistles of St. James, St. Peter, and St. John, and in all the Gospels, or the curé who forbids these epistles to be placed in the hands of his parishioners. Judge for yourself, I say, which is the Catholic and Christian, and which is the schismatic and heretic! And my man," adds Oberlin, "went home much consoled."

On another occasion, a Roman Catholic schoolmaster came a long distance to show to Oberlin a Bible he had purchased at Strasbourg, and to ask him to pronounce his opinion as to its being a genuine copy of the veritable Holy Bible. This schoolmaster, Oberlin says, was "a good Catholic, that is to say, a good, true Christian." By this wise and gentle manner of meeting these difficulties, and by the active goodness which he manifested towards all, it came to pass that "the hatred and repugnance formerly felt towards us, and which was the source of so many troubles, gave place gradually to friendliness and brotherly love, when it was seen that both our works and our doctrines were those of the truly Christian, and therefore the truly Catholic Church." Roman Catholic worshippers, as has been said, were frequently seen in the church at Waldbach, and it was not unusual for them to partake even of the Sacrament, side by side with the family and Christian friends of Oberlin, of all classes and ages.

CHAPTER V.

NEW LORD OF MANOR—PENSIONNAT—OBERLIN'S VIEW ON WORK—GERMAN EDUCATION—HIS WIFE GIVES HER JEWELS—DIET—OFFERS OF WORK ELSEWHERE—VISIT OF LENZ—DEVELOPS TRADE—INTRODUCES COTTON—WOOL-SPINNING—NURSES—LETTER FROM HIS PEOPLE ON FALLING ASLEEP IN CHURCH—HIS REPLY—DEATH OF HIS WIFE—THE TWO PRECIOUS STONES—LETTER FROM LAVATER—LOUISE SCHEPPLER COMMENDED TO HIS CHILDREN—SAVES TWO YOUNG ROMAN CATHOLICS—DIARY—SERMONS.

THE landed proprietors of the Province of the Lower Rhine resided almost constantly in Paris. The evils of absenteeism were not less there than elsewhere. The country estates of these noblemen were superintended by agents, who often provoked the ill-will of the people; and in the Ban de la Roche, petty vexations, and sometimes serious discord, arose through their maladroitness or tyranny. The differences in matters of religion were often the pretext for these. The joy of the Ban de la Rochois was consequently great when they learned that the Baron de Dietrich, a Protestant gentleman of Strasbourg, had become the "Seigneur" of the district, and intended to reside there. The Baron took possession of his estates in the summer of 1771. It was an occasion of great rejoicing. Oberlin, who had the soul of an artist, leaned towards histrionic displays of

OBERLIN'S HOUSE.

an innocent kind. Heading a large procession of his parishioners, he received the new Seigneur on a conspicuous rising ground, which commanded the valley. Madame Oberlin had stationed troops of young girls in all the woods and shrubberies, skirting the road by which the Baron de Dietrich must advance. These girls, previously well instructed in their part, kept themselves entirely concealed from view, and at certain signals given, burst forth into beautiful singing; so that to the Seigneur and his friends it appeared that the woods on every side, wherever he approached, greeted him with music. The effect of these "invisible choirs of sweet voices" was magical, and exceeding beautiful.

The Baron became the firm friend of Oberlin, and seconded all his patriotic and benevolent schemes. He it was who built for him the new Presbytère, that which now stands near the church at Waldbach, and which has been visited by so many "pilgrims," who had heard of the fame of the good pastor. The Baron also raised considerably the poor salaries of the pastor, his schoolmasters, and other helpers.

Several of the pupils of Oberlin from the village schools having attained a high reputation in different towns, as teachers, etc., he found himself pressed on all sides to undertake the training of others, not natives of the valleys. This suggested to him the idea of instituting a "Pensionnat" for boys and girls, adjoining his own house. An attractive picture of his little college is given by his biographers. Simplicity of life, love of work, a spirit of order, of cheerfulness,

economy, and goodwill prevailed among its inmates. The instruction they received was "varied and solid." Mountain-climbing developed their physique, and those who came as strangers soon caught the tone of simplicity, and the gentle manners of the children of the Ban de la Roche. At one time, it appears, however, that, through the influence of one of the teachers—for it certainly was not through that of Oberlin's family—a tone inclining to fanaticism crept into this little community. The children became grave and sad. Religious feelings, and those not of the happiest, were stimulated, to the detriment of solid work and the performance of duty; and their health began to suffer. Oberlin marked this, and hastened to place before his charge a happier view of life. The following address which he gave to them is characteristic:—

"My dear pupils! have you misunderstood my teachings? Do you imagine that when you give yourself to the Lord Jesus, you ought no longer to laugh, to play, to be merry together? On the contrary, there are none who have such a right to gaiety of heart as the children of God. St. Paul tells us to 'rejoice evermore!' Now, you are not rejoicing evermore; you are labouring under some error. There is a time for everything. Prayer itself, and other religious exercises, which are meant to be to the honour of God, may become displeasing to Him, and even sinful, if we suffer them to cause us to neglect the work which He has entrusted to us to do.

"A right application to work requires two things,—first, that we perceive clearly what we have to do, and in what manner we ought to do it. Secondly, that we practically aim at doing our work in the very best way we can, and in doing it in the shortest time in which we can do it well.

"Now, all that hinders these objects is bad, whether it be

gossip or laughter, singing or praying, mirth or sadness. And whoever falls into any of these errors, and thus fails in application to work (the work which is ordained by the same God who ordained prayer and praise)—whoever, I say, falls into these errors, through any cause, whether it be levity or a false conception of devotion, will certainly be in some way chastened by God. For all—all the commands of God are to be obeyed by us with humility and fear. Ponder this, therefore, and understand, that (1) Prayer and other religious exercises, so pursued as to cause you to neglect the work entrusted to you, may be an evil. (2) Merriment, fun, laughter, and gaiety of heart, with constant remembrance of the presence of God, if not interfering with, but refreshing you for your needful work, may be, and are good and pleasing to God."

The Pensionnat became a training-school for many strong Christian workers. The pupils formed, as they left it, a sort of confraternity, and continued to correspond with each other and with their chief, the memory of whom stimulated them to every kind of useful activity in their scattered spheres of labour, in Alsace, in Paris, in London, in St. Petersburg, and elsewhere.

The cause of education began at this time to receive an impulse generally throughout Germany. The mechanical routine system hitherto pursued was abandoned, and better methods tried and adopted. M. Basedow, an enthusiast in the cause of educational reform, established an Educational Institute at Dessau, which afterwards became a model for the schools throughout Germany. Oberlin lost no time in opening a correspondence with M. Basedow, which led to a warm and lasting friendship. The new Institution, conceived on a comprehensive and generous

basis, could not be fairly started or maintained without voluntary contributions of funds from all sides.

Oberlin's own resources were very little raised above those of his friends and parishioners all around him; but his genius for economic schemes, which already had enabled him absolutely to abolish extreme poverty in the valleys, to establish a system of ready-money payments in place of credit, to open a savings bank, and to render every family of the Ban de la Roche self-supporting, however poor, suggested to him a still further step, that of establishing a central *caisse*, into which each person, who was willing to do so, could throw his or her mite, towards the aid of some pressing necessities or useful works beyond the barriers of their own mountains. The list of good works thus subscribed to by the poor Ban de la Rochois might put to shame the results of our modern charity organisations. Not only did contributions flow readily from these poor mountaineers for the help of neighbouring communes suffering from occasional inundations, from fires, or from epidemics, but small funds were raised and placed in the hands of their pastor to be sent to the abolitionists of slavery, to the Bible Society, to the Colporteurs' Society of France, and for other objects.

On this occasion, although Oberlin contrived to create an interest among his mountaineers even in the progress of higher education, he could not tax their sympathies so far as to encourage contributions from their narrow resources for this object. A former pupil of his happened to be an assistant to M.

Basedow. Oberlin was deeply affected one day by the receipt of an enormous package, delivered by a carrier, who was rarely charged with goods of such dimensions and value. This contained a present of books from M. Basedow and from Oberlin's former pupil. The books were handsome and solid, and most welcome in the little library of the Presbytère. Oberlin wrote to the giver a letter full of tender acknowledgments. His wife and he (he said) had kneeled down, and together thanked the Giver of all good for having put so kind a thought into the hearts of their friends, while they besought for those friends the best of blessings for time and eternity.

But these two generous souls were somewhat burdened at the same time by the thought of the debt which they knew was being unavoidably incurred by their friends in the furtherance of their educational schemes. "We are not rich," said Oberlin—a fact which none would dispute—"but perhaps our friends will accept even the trifle we can send them." "Perhaps," replied his wife; and she left the room with the air of a person to whom a bright idea had occurred. In a short time she returned,—Oberlin writes to his friends at Dessau,—holding up in her fingers a pair of pretty, valuable earrings, which had been a gift to her from some friend in Strasbourg, in the days before her marriage, when she affected the elegance and richness of personal adornment so severely criticised by her husband. "Tears filled my eyes," he said, "when I saw my dear wife coming to make this offer-

ing. She told me the exact value of the jewels at the time they were bought, and begs that you will accept the offering for the good cause which you have in hand." Half-a-dozen silver spoons, heirlooms, which Oberlin had possessed before his marriage, had long ago been flung into the treasury of the little commonwealth; they were replaced by horn spoons, which came to be in large request as the little family gradually increased, and a small regiment of children gathered round the table for the daily meal. This family, who grew up to do strong and good service to God and man, were nurtured upon fare which does not sustain some of the modern theories of what is essential for the strengthening of the human frame. The *menu*, from year to year, was much as follows:—"Potatoes and milk. Brown bread and milk. Potatoes and green vegetables, pleasantly cooked with a little milk. White bread and milk. Rice boiled in milk, eaten with oat-cake. Fruit with bread. Corn-flour made into a pudding with milk." Meat appears to have been almost an unknown luxury, though omelettes were a frequent addition to the family dinner. Extreme order, refinement, and care, however, characterised the preparation and setting out of the daily repasts. The Oberlin family were connoisseurs in potatoes; they required that they should always be of the best quality, sound, well-shaped, and prepared in the most scientific manner, so as to be at once wholesome and palatable.

The guests of Oberlin—sometimes persons of distinction in the literary and religious world—did not fare more sumptuously than the family. It was not

"high living," but attractions of a very different kind, which drew pilgrims of all classes to Waldersbach; nor is it on record that any one ever suffered in health from a residence there. The potatoes and milk seem to have been held in affectionate remembrance by many who profited in body as well as in soul by a visit to the Ban de la Roche.

The deep and tender affection which Oberlin had for his wife increased with every year spent in her society. He appears to have had at times a dark presentiment that his beloved companion would be early taken from him, and this gave a tinge of sadness to his affection for her. The periods of her enforced absence from home were times of real agony to him. She was obliged to go to Strasbourg several times, on the occasion of the birth of a child, there being then no *sage-femme* in the valleys, and her health never being robust. On one of these occasions, her husband, who rarely lost the complete command of his feelings, was found alone in his study, weeping bitterly. He had written down the following words, which more than once he was heard to repeat: "O my God, take all; give me nothing but potato-peelings for my daily food; but *leave me my wife!*" Her absences appeared to him terribly long; "the most profound sadness seemed to weigh down that usually strong mind. He blamed himself for what appeared to him a lack of Christian resignation, yet he failed to master the sadness." He wrote in his journal, during one of these periods of trial, the following confession to his heavenly Friend:—

"O Lord Jesus, Thou knowest how terrible to me is this long week! I wish to be content and grateful; I desire to thank God for the sweet prospect I have of seeing my dear wife again next week. Nevertheless, I have not one moment of peace. My heart is disquieted within me, and I am in pain, and yet I know not the source of my trouble. In vain I ask myself, 'What does this mean, this anxiety?' I cannot explain it. I tell myself that I ought to be resigned to the loving will of God, who up to this present moment has treated me with so much tenderness and goodness. I condemn myself before God for being carried away by such grief and ardent longing concerning any fellow-creature, however lovable; and I confess that this is idolatry. I argue thus with my unquiet heart, but doing so does not bring me one moment of greater peace; my heart only answers me, 'I know all that,' yet I cannot rest, and I know not whence comes this ever-increasing anxiety. O my God, what are Thy designs? Whence this presentiment of sorrow? Whatever I may be doing, whether I read, or pray, or walk, or weep, it is always the same. My beloved wife! is she dead? On Saturday it seemed to me she *must* be dead; and now again I fear the same. Has she gone before, into the blessed abodes, to meet her celestial Spouse? Oh! how worthy she is of such a translation! but then, O my dear God, if it be possible, let me follow her quickly."

There are words recorded by this loving heart almost too tender for repetition. He seems to have thought it his duty to aim at the "lofty perfection of Fénélon;" and he strove to find in God alone his supreme joy, rebuking himself for the passionate fervour of his love for his wife, the "light of his eyes;" yet this affection only deepened as the years went on, and continued to burn—a pure and holy fire—to the last hour, in the heart of the aged man, many, many years after he had laid her in the tomb.

Their children were: three sons, Frederic, Charles,

and Henry Gottfried, and four daughters, Fidelité, Louisa, Henrietta, and Frederica.

Oberlin never willingly left the family circle. His presence was frequently required, however, in Strasbourg, where he had a large circle of correspondents, as well as business relations in connection with his many practical schemes. In order to save time, and to avoid being absent from his beloved family and people, he would saddle his good horse at twilight, after a long day spent in active work, and mounting, set off at a brisk trot, riding all through the summer night, and arriving at Strasbourg in the morning. Solitary passengers heard sometimes the sound of his horse's feet upon the road at midnight, and not that only, but the sound of the pastor's voice as he conversed aloud with his God by the way, commending to His grace the souls whom he loved, or praising Him for all His wonderful works in nature as in redemption. He would then complete his business in Strasbourg during the day, and mounting his horse again at night, return with the same rapidity, traversing that long distance, and arriving at his home in time for his Spartan breakfast of milk and oat-cake. He was no traveller. Baden, Colmar, and one or two other German towns, were the limits of his experience Switzerland he always desired to visit, but his duties at home drew him back from this projected excursion on one occasion when he had reached Fribourg. The Alps, of which he often dreamed, remained for him only a faint, fair, distant outline of snow, viewed from the confines of Switzerland.

On several occasions he was pressed to accept a more lucrative cure, involving a higher social position than that which he then held. He unhesitatingly and firmly declined all such offers, feeling himself pledged to those whom he had raised out of so much misery and ignorance, and bound by duty to continue the work he had begun. Only on one occasion did he waver. A colony had been founded in South America by some missionaries of the Augsburg Confession. Difficulties of every kind encompassed the colonists—malaria, the hostility of native races, the tyranny of Portuguese rule, etc. A man was wanted who could grapple with such surroundings, and establish a Church in the midst of them, by dint of energy, firmness, benevolence, and strong faith. A consultation was held by the Church Synod, and Oberlin was indicated as the man for this work. He was urgently invited to accept the charge. He did, in fact, accept it, attracted partly by his natural love of adventure and of energetic, initiatory action, and believing also that it might be the will of God that he should leave his country for a harder enterprise than that he had already achieved. Madame Oberlin was quite ready to accompany him to the ends of the earth if need be. Circumstances, on which it is needless to dwell, so far altered the character of the whole project, however, that he felt it best to abandon the idea of this new and arduous undertaking.

Hospitality was a duty strongly impressed by Oberlin on the Ban de la Rochois. They had not much to offer in the way of sumptuous entertainment,

but such as they had was offered freely to all who came. Occasionally a delicate student from one of the German universities successfully recruited his health under the care of the generous family of Waldersbach. There was at Strasbourg a sort of literary guild "consecrated to the muses and to mutual friendship." The president of this guild was a savant named Solymann, whom Goethe in several of his letters mentioned as "his dear Socrates." Among the more distinguished members of this poetic guild were Goethe, Jung Stilling, and Lenz—a dramatic poet. Lenz's life resembled in its misfortunes that of Tasso. An unhappy attachment brought upon him an attack of melancholy, which increased with his years. He was brought by his friends to the Ban de la Roche in 1778, through the deep snows of a severe January. They led him to the door of the Presbytère in a state of mental derangement bordering on madness, in the hope that "in the presence of Oberlin, he might recover health and peace." He remained for many weeks with Oberlin, watched over and cared for "with angelic tenderness," and with true human tact and delicacy, by Madame Oberlin. The children also were taught to regard and treat him as one who had a special claim on their kindness and respect. Being a student of theology, he asked Oberlin to allow him occasionally to preach for him. To this Oberlin consented. The benevolent and sensitive face of the pastor as he sat in his own church in the place of a listener, was not altogether free from traces of anxiety, as on the first occasion he

watched the movements of the mad poet, and listened to his utterances in the pulpit. He was well pleased, however, with the result. Lenz's sermons were good, sound, and expressive of evangelistic hopefulness. But the effort being over, as soon as he went back to the house, the dark and gloomy mood seemed to return upon him with redoubled force. At times he writhed and strove as one in agony. Scarcely a day passed in which he did not attempt suicide. If he remained out of sight for an hour it was a cause of anxiety and terror to his host and hostess. The genius and natural goodness of disposition which shone out in moments of sanity, and his sore mental sufferings, attracted Oberlin to him ; and such was the affection that he conceived for this poor young man that he declined to part with him until assured by physicians that the malady was too deeply seated for human skill to reach. He then himself took him to Strasbourg, and placed him under suitable care.

On Oberlin's first arrival at the Ban de la Roche there was not a single artisan in the district. When the poor inhabitants required any repairs—and this happened often—especially in the matter of carts, harness, and agricultural implements, they were obliged to make a journey of several leagues, which cost them both time and money. Oberlin saw that this state of things must not continue. Having taken means of testing the inclinations and capabilities of the young men of the valleys, he selected from among them a few who seemed likely to take to skilled labour, gave them respectable attire, and sent them

for a brief apprenticeship to some town outside the valleys. Thus in a few years the Ban de la Roche had its own wheelwrights, smiths, tailors, masons, carpenters, glaziers, etc., and the most happy results followed. A number of people in the valleys thereby obtained an honest subsistence, and the taste for mechanical work, a taste intimately connected with civilistion, rapidly grew up among them. The inhabitants of the place began henceforward to have recourse to native artisans; and finally, money which had formerly gone out of the valleys circulated within, to the advantage of all.

Oberlin himself possessed much mechanical taste and skill, and knew in general the use of every instrument which was handled by his parishioners. He had established near to his own house a complete workshop, to which he frequently resorted when requiring a change from his studies and meditations. Gradually he was able to open the gates of the Ban de la Roche so as to attract thither several humble branches of industry. The first in which he succeeded was that of the spinning of wool and cotton, which was done by the spinning-wheel. M. Reber, of Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines, who had spinning factories in that village, as well as at Münster, visited Waldbach, in order to give an impulse to the work. Old men, little children, and women, who had formerly been reduced to misery and idleness during the winter season, found in this work an interest as well as the means of living. In the annals of the parish, kept by Oberlin, it is stated that from May, 1785, up to the

same month in 1786, M. Reber paid for work thus done, 32,000 francs (£1280) to the poor people of the valleys—a very considerable sum in those days in the eyes of the Ban de la Rochois.

In the first instance, the people of the valleys regarded with extreme dislike the introduction of this work; agricultural and pastoral work appeared to them the only honourable means of living; their pride and exclusiveness on this subject rivalled that of any ancient aristocracy bound hand and foot by conventional prejudices. It required all the powers of persuasion of M. and Mme. Oberlin to overcome this obstacle. The people were accustomed to despise everything which was characteristic of city life. When it was proposed that their daughters should learn to spin, they replied contemptuously: "Are you going to make town girls of them?" The only sure means of practically doing away with the prejudice, was that M. and Mme. Oberlin themselves should spin. They set themselves to work, and in seeing their assiduity, skill, and enjoyment of the work, the people, as they had done in other matters, began to wonder, admire, and imitate. It was necessary always to add example to precept, even in the smallest details.

The celebrated saying of Terence: "I am a man, and nothing which concerns a man can be a subject of indifference to me," was one of the mottoes which Oberlin kept continually before him; and, following this principle, he stooped to the smallest detail which might affect the well-being of the most humble of his

flock. He had himself acquired some medical and surgical knowledge in his youth. He kept a small dispensary in his house, which was continually visited by people suffering from any illness. He himself made up and distributed gratis the medicines; and frequently he had to overcome with great effort the repugnance of a refined and sensitive nature when they applied to him in cases where wounds and ulcers required to be dressed. Occasionally he sent one of his young schoolmasters, Sebastian Scheidecker (who became afterwards his chief *aide-de-camp*), to the sick in different parts of the district, in order to minister to them with his own hands. Desiring that Sebastian should possess greater skill, Oberlin sent him to Strasbourg, to go through a brief apprenticeship in medicine and surgery at the house of his former master, Ziegenhagen. He also sent several promising young women of the valleys to Strasbourg to learn midwifery; others received the necessary instruction as sick nurses. Finally he was able to say that he had established in all the villages of the valleys instructed persons, who were able to "nurse and heal the sick, and gradually to abolish all the old murderous treatments." He also published small text-books of instruction upon the remedies to be applied to persons apparently drowned, frozen, or suffocated. He himself had the happiness of restoring to vitality three little girls in his parish, two of whom had been drawn into the swift waters of the Bruche, and another who had almost perished in the deep snow. In all of them life had appeared to be extinct when they were found.

In all these things he was well seconded by his trusty Scheidecker, who had returned from Strasbourg full of zeal and skill in the healing art.

A printing press was next introduced at Waldersbach. Oberlin worked it himself, and instructed some of his pupils in the art. All notices concerning religious worship, or social and political matters, were here printed, and then distributed by boy-messengers in the different villages. Texts of Scripture, in a large clear type, were also printed, for use in the cottages and schools ; and in several other ways the printing press was made of use.

A fire among the villages was always, as in Switzerland, a terrible visitation; the houses being entirely of wood, and sometimes thatched with heather or pine branches, were rapidly destroyed when once the flames broke out. It had been the custom in a fire for the villagers to seize every available vessel, and to pass them on from hand to hand from the nearest mountain streams. Oberlin was not content with this ineffectual method of meeting the dreaded calamity, which from time to time visited the neighbouring communes, as well as his own parish ; he accordingly had fire-engines brought from Strasbourg, and trained a band of his own parishioners as a fire brigade. This brigade and their engines were at the service of any and all the neighbouring communes in case of need.

Among the unpublished papers in the possession of Oberlin, the following is sufficiently characteristic to deserve to be quoted. On a certain Sunday, there

was found in the collection-box of the church at Fonday, a note which ran thus :—

"Dear Pastor and Deacons—How can we overcome our weakness in the matter of falling asleep during the service in church ; thus losing precious moments, which can never be recalled ? Does the proposition we are about to make appear to you unbecoming or wrong,—namely, that we should take with us to church something to occupy our hands, for example, some knitting for the poor, in order to keep ourselves awake ? Would it shock any other persons, who are themselves strong enough, perhaps, to resist the influence of sleep ? As we prefer not to sign our names, we beseech you to give us your answer publicly."

The following is Oberlin's reply, given from the pulpit :—

"Dear friends, whoever you may be, who find yourselves in the embarrassment described,—here is my reply :—You come to church for instruction and edification. Sleep, overpowering you, prevents you attaining these ends. All honest means therefore are allowable in order to drive away sleep, provided they can be employed without hindering your attention, or that of others. Some people—men—take snuff to keep themselves awake ; you who are women do not take snuff, but you wish to knit for the poor. How would our Divine Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we assemble to worship, how would He who is charity personified, reply to your question ? I believe He would smile on you, and would reply as follows : 'Do according to your wish, dear souls ; for works of charity agree well with worship in My house of prayer.' I believe He would approve your design. Knit, therefore, dear friends, knit in order to clothe the naked, while driving away sleep. To do this is better than taking a hundred pinches of snuff for the same purpose. Knit, then, for the poor ; and your Saviour will one day say to you : 'I was naked, and ye clothed me ; enter ye into the joy of your Lord.'"

Oberlin held a service in the church every Friday,

on which occasion he gave a simple lecture on some portion of Scripture. He would sometimes stop and ask his congregation, "Have I spoken long enough, my friends? have you had enough?" The people would answer: "Go on, go on, if you please, father;" or occasionally: "Yes, we think we have had enough for the present." He even allowed them to interpose without his asking the question, and to say: "Will you kindly stop now, father? we are beginning to be weary." He dreaded nothing so much as formalism and coldness in public worship, and in order to avoid these he discouraged the too frequent repetition of the same words in prayer, the same prayers, and the same responses, and succeeded in imparting to the whole service a character of spontaneity and freedom not often witnessed. Every one who went to church in the Ban de la Roche felt that he or she was called upon to take part actively and individually in a worship which consisted of real prayer and genuine praise.

Madame Oberlin died suddenly in January, 1783. This sorrowful event shall be recorded in Oberlin's own words, without comment:—

"On the evening preceding my wife's death, all the household having retired for the night, and she and I being alone, she said to me: 'The Lord my God has kept His promise to me in regard to thee, my beloved. He promised me that I should see His salvation, and of a truth He has granted me to see His salvation by means of thee; for it is to thee, under God, that I owe the fuller knowledge of His salvation, and of the blessedness which awaits us after death. I thank thee, my dear husband; and I thank God, whose faithfulness I have proved

through thee.' As she was thus speaking, it struck ten o'clock, and, as was our wont, we then wished each other good-night. I retired to my room upstairs, and she remained in hers lower down, with her baby of eight weeks old, and the nurse. About six o'clock in the morning, a servant came and awoke me, saying, 'Sir, madame is ill.' I was overpowered with sleep; and as I was accustomed often to hear that she was unwell, I was not alarmed, and fell asleep again. The servant came a second time, saying, 'Sir, madame is *very* ill.' In a moment I leapt from my bed and went to her. I found her seated on the side of her bed, her feet in a bath of hot water, and her head leaning on the shoulder of the nurse. At the moment I entered the room, I heard her utter these words: 'Lord Jesus, save me from this terrible extremity.' I passed my arm around her waist to support her, and in doing so I felt a convulsive movement pass through her frame, and a choking sob in her throat, after which she became perfectly still. The attitude in which we were supporting her being a strained one, we laid her gently down, thinking she had fallen asleep. On feeling her pulse, however, I could discern no movement; and placing my hand on her heart I perceived it had ceased to beat. I left her to the skill and care of Sebastian Scheidecker, who had been called in, and rushed precipitately to my garret. There, throwing myself on my knees, I forced myself to pray to God that this fainting fit might pass away quickly. I say I *forced myself*, for, in spite of the terrible strength and ardour of my desire to be heard, my prayer seemed to be of lead; it *would not* rise up to heaven. Another power, which was not myself, then forced me to cry: 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name.' I was impelled to break forth thus into praise. Then I said: 'Ah! what doest Thou, my God? Thou hast taken my wife from me, and yet I am obliged to praise Thee.' I went downstairs. Sebastian, hearing my approach, came to meet me, intending to break to me the news of my loss. But I prevented him, saying that I was already instructed on that head. I flung myself over my beloved dead; I pressed my lips on hers; my tears flowed over her face. Alas! no response. It was a soulless corpse. . . . That day I had strength enough

to write the necessary letters, and arrange all that needed to be arranged ; and after that I gave full place to my sorrow, which was so bitter that I prayed without ceasing that I might die. It would have been perfect joy to me to have been buried by the side of her—my other soul. . . . But God, whose hand had dealt this terrible blow, still held me up. He treated me with infinite tenderness. His management of me was like that of a nurse who watches over a fevered and delirious patient, until, little by little, he is restored to reason."

Louise Scheppler, already mentioned, recorded the fact that, on the evening before her death, Madame Oberlin went round among her children, and placing her hand on the head of each in turn, as if for benediction, remained silent for a moment with each. She had never before acted precisely in this way. Apparently she had some presentiment of her approaching death, although no unfavourable symptoms had followed the birth of her last child, nor was she known to have any incipient disease.

Many years later, Louise narrating to a visitor these circumstances, said : "My master always feared to lose his cherished wife. God, in order to prove him, took her suddenly forty years ago, and after only sixteen years of marriage. The good minister was struck down as by a thunderbolt ; I trembled for his reason and for his life. But what was my astonishment to see him, after a period of terrible silence, fall on his knees and give thanks to God. From that time till now, no complaint, no murmur, has ever escaped his lips."

"This most grievous blow," writes Stuber—"the death of his wife—rendered Oberlin inaccessible, so to

speak, to all other sorrow ; invulnerable to all the trials of earth. From this time forward he was more calm, comprehending more than ever the emptiness of this world, and despising all hardship and pain. His strength was in God ; he fought the good fight ; he was faithful unto death. He met all the difficulties and vicissitudes of life with a courage which was Divine."

"From that time," says another biographer, "the passive graces shone as brightly in him as the active virtues had hitherto done." Patience in him had her perfect work. But "he was never separated from his wife." He continued to live in her society. Every day, from the day of her death to the last of his own life, he devoted an hour to holding communion with her, in drawing near to her (*à se rapprocher d'elle*). He looked upon her as his guardian angel ; and this was no mere poetical form of speech with him. "In his dreams at night she visited him, sensibly, visibly, and held converse with him. When he was meditating some practical scheme for the people, she would encourage or hold him back from it, as knowing more clearly than he what was wise." These dreams were to him a reality. When asked : "How do you distinguish between these dreams which are to you a revelation, and ordinary dreams?" he only replied : "How do you distinguish between one colour and another?" He continued always to desire a speedy reunion with her in the "Father's house," and often said : "I hope that the world in which God will reunite me to my beloved wife will soon open to me."

He received at this time a letter from Lavater, full of sympathy :—

"I know the greatness of your loss, and I thank God for your tranquillity and resignation. May He who heals all wounded hearts heal yours. Pray and work ! Suffer, but with your eyes always directed heavenward. Bow low beneath the yoke, and He will lighten it, and enable you even to rejoice under it. . . . I have faith in faith, and I love the power of love. . . . [Oberlin, it appears, had written to Lavater some words of praise, to which Lavater replies :] I must repeat a thousand times, I am nothing; I can do nothing; I possess nothing; I know nothing as yet. Oh, my dear, if one day I should attain to something, then you will see that that which you now take to be something in me is really nothing at all ! Only hold out the hand of friendship to me in this barren land. . . . For some time past, my health has been much shaken. Nevertheless, I have proved that God is strong in those who are weak.—*Vale et ama amentem*,

"J. C. LAVATER.

"RICHTERSWEYL, *March*, 1784."

Oberlin wrote thus to a lady who had met with a sore bereavement not long after the death of Madame Oberlin :—

"I have before me two precious stones. They are perfectly alike in colour, of the same water, clear, pure, and clean ; yet there is a marked difference between them as to their brilliancy and the light which they reflect. One has a dazzling brightness, while the other is dull, and the eye has not so much pleasure in regarding it. What is the reason of this difference? It is this: the one has been cut only in a few *facets;* the other has ten times as many. These *facets* are produced by a violent operation ; it is necessary to cut, to smooth, to polish. If these stones had had life, and had been capable of feeling, the one which received eighty *facets* would have thought itself very unhappy, and would have envied the fate of the other which only received eight, and had undergone only a tenth part of its sufferings.

But the operation being over, it is done for ever. That which had suffered the most shines for ever, and is a delight to behold. May not this serve to illustrate the saying of our Saviour: 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted?' Blessed are they all, whether we contemplate them apart, or in comparison with others who have suffered more or less."

From this period, Louise Scheppler became the directress of Oberlin's household, and the guide and helper of his children. Some years after the death of her beloved mistress, she wrote, on New Year's day, the following letter to Oberlin, laying it on his desk before he appeared in the morning:—

"DEAR AND BELOVED FATHER,—Suffer me, at the beginning of this new year, to ask a favour of you which I have long wished that you would grant. As I am now really independent,—that is, as I have now no longer my father to maintain,—I beseech you to grant me the favour of making me your adopted daughter. Do not, I entreat you, give me any more wages; for, as you treat me like your child in every other respect, I earnestly wish you to do so in this particular also. I need little for the support of the body. My clothes, stockings, and *sabots* will cost something; but, when I want them, I can ask you for them, as a child asks its father. I entreat you to grant me my request, and to regard me as your tenderly attached daughter,

"LOUISE SCHEPPLER."

This request was granted. The virtues of this poor peasant woman, who was elevated in intelligence, and ennobled and refined throughout her whole character by the power of the religion of Christ, deserve to be dwelt upon for a moment. Her lifelong devotion to God and to her fellow-creatures are well illustrated by the following extract from the Will of Oberlin, which

was read aloud before his family and friends assembled after his death :—

"My dear Children, — I bequeath to you my faithful attendant, who brought you all up—our good Louise. No words can express what she has been to our family. Your dear mother took her into her service when she was fifteen years of age ; after the death of that beloved mother, Louise became to you a careful nurse and a faithful instructor. But she was more than this. A true apostle of Jesus Christ, she fulfilled a mission in all the villages of the Ban de la Roche, assembling the children together and teaching them, and superintending their training. This was not the work of a few days. She had innumerable difficulties to overcome,—the wild character of our mountain children, their rude patois, which she laboured with me to abolish, translating for them all they said into French ; then there were the rough paths, bad roads, and our terrible winters ; all these she braved,—stones, rocks, waters, pouring rains, icy winds, frost, deep snow beneath and thickly falling snow above and around. Nothing kept her back ; returning in the evening, exhausted, wet, or rigid with cold, she set herself at once to attend to my house and children. She thus devoted to God and to our interests, not only her time and talents, but her health and her whole being. For some years past, her frame has been quite broken down by the fatigues she has undergone, by the too sudden constant passing from heat to cold, and from cold to heat, by her walks through the snow, in which she often plunged up to the waist, returning with her underclothing wet or stiff with frozen moisture, and her knees wounded and bleeding from the friction against her icy frozen garments caused by walking. Some may think, perhaps, that she was well rewarded by the good salary I gave her. No, children, no ! Since the death of your mother I have never been able to persuade her to accept the smallest salary, and she always received as if it was a favour, even the clothes and the nourishment which I gave her, and which were the result of her own economy and fidelity. Judge then, my children, of the debt which you owe her ; in your illnesses and mine, how many wakeful nights has

she spent, what anxieties and cares has she borne! Once more, I bequeath her to you. . . . You will carry out my wishes; you will be now to her, as much as you have it in your power, what she has been to us."

The children of Oberlin desired to admit Louise to an equal share of the very small inheritance left them by their father; but this she refused, asking only as a favour to be allowed to end her days in the old home at Waldersbach. Oberlin's family vowed, and kept faithfully their vow, that Louise should never want for any comfort or earthly good which they themselves possessed, so long as they continued to possess it.

The records relating to Oberlin's life and works between the year of his wife's death and the beginning of the eventful period of the French Revolution, are scanty and scattered. So far as it can be traced, his life during that period of nine or ten years, though not very eventful, was actively and unceasingly devoted to works of practical usefulness, and to the cultivation of the intelligence and characters of the increasing population of his wide parish. His efforts for the good of the people were never relaxed. So Mr. Heisch wrote in 1793—"I visited the Ban de la Roche generally once a-year during that period, and I found the different intellectual, religious, and moral agencies always actively at work. Practical alterations and improvements were always going on;" but what he chiefly notices is "the extraordinary change effected amongst the younger generation there." The manners of the young Ban de la Rochois came to be distinguished throughout Alsace, for their refinement,

grace, courtesy, and frank cordiality. These were only the outward signs of the deeper work in the hearts and souls of the people.

During those years, Oberlin succeeded in finally overcoming the wild and lawless spirit which until now had still continued to prevail to some extent among the populations of the mountains. There were still certain young men who preferred a life of brigandage and robbery to one of industry. The following incident was related to a French lady who visited the Ban de la Roche, by a schoolmaster, who entertained her with a recital of his family history, while acting as her guide from Schirmeck to the house of the venerable pastor.

"This man," he said, indicating Oberlin, "is full of goodness; his life has been one succession of noble actions. I will tell you one of them. 'I had a sister who lived at Schirmeck; her name was Juliette; I loved her dearly. She belonged, as I do myself, to the Roman Catholic religion. She occasionally paid a visit to the valleys to see an aunt who belonged to the same faith, and differed from the rest of the population of the canton, who, as you know, are Protestants. Juliette was young and beautiful. She won the heart of a youth at Fonday, whom she shortly afterwards married. They established themselves at Waldersbach, near to the home of the good pastor. This was in the month of September, 1789. There were certain men of the mountains who had not yet been subdued by the powerful and loving influence of the pastor; they remained brutal, ignorant, and wild.

My sister and her husband had enemies among them. He was a rich man, or at least was considered so. A dispute arose concerning some forest land which these wild mountaineers considered should be left open to their own ravages. My sister became a mother. The fact of an heir having appeared to make the disputed rights still more difficult, seemed to increase the savage hatred of the brigands. They accused my brother-in-law of being a favourer of the aristocratic *régime* of France. They also spread scandalous and false reports concerning his wife—my sister. A plot was formed among them to murder my brother-in-law and the infant. Juliette had decided to take the child to Schirmeck to be baptized by a minister of her own Church. This was the time chosen for the execution of the hateful plot. In order to reach Schirmeck they must travel through some of the darkest and wildest portions of the forest. My brother-in-law received some intimation of the intended violence, and immediately communicated it to Oberlin. The pastor said with a smile: 'My friend, God protects the just, and punishes the violent; place yourself in the hands of the Most High, have perfect confidence, and go straight forward without fear, and with a good conscience. I will also go with you.' Juliette and her husband set forth on their journey, accompanied by the pastor; she carrying in her arms her infant a few weeks old. Oberlin walked in front. No trouble of any kind disturbed his serene countenance. Occasionally he turned to address cheering words to the husband and wife. When the

little caravan had arrived at a turn in the forest surrounded by thick underwood, which would have afforded a complete ambush, Oberlin paused and knelt down. Stretching forth his hands in a protecting attitude over the young people, he cried in a loud and powerful voice, which was echoed back from the mountains: 'Great God! Thou seest the crime which is being meditated; Thou seest the innocence of these persons who are now so filled with fear. All powerful God! protect us from this danger; turn it aside, or give us the strength to overcome it.' He ceased to speak, and a few moments later several savage-looking men, who had been concealed behind the undergrowth of oak, rushed from the wood, with threatening cries, towards the unoffending objects of their unreasonable fury. The face of Juliette became as pale as death. Her husband prepared himself to fight to the last for her and for his child; but Oberlin, calm and unmoved, stepped out to meet the brigands, not at all with an air of supplication, nor yet with one of threat or anger, but as a master-spirit full of clemency, and conscious of power, ready to pardon the evil passions which he condemned. He had caught the little infant from the arms of its mother, and went forward to the would-be assassins, carrying with him the little soft white bundle. Presenting it to them, he said: 'See, here is the creature who you think has wronged you so much, the infant which troubles the peace of your days. Look at it; how easy to destroy its life! Why! what holds you back from your design? Why do you not slay it at once?

Whence this hesitation and weakness?' The ferocious men seemed suddenly to change their character; they fell back apparently ashamed, and stood perfectly still. 'What are you thinking of?' said Oberlin; 'why do you hide yourselves thus? What are you ashamed of? Is this baby, or is your pastor so terrible? Have I not consecrated all the years of my life to comfort you in your troubles, and to help you? How is this that you tremble before me?' In a moment the enemies of Juliette were on their knees before him; his imposing aspect disarmed their evil intentions. They were conquered. With tears in their eyes, they implored him to forgive the wickedness which they had meditated. Oberlin replied smiling: 'My friends, if you wish me to forget this day on the mountains, never forget it yourselves.' These men had not dreamed of the Protestant pastor acting as guide to Roman Catholic parents on their way to attend a ceremony in their own Church. They were at first astonished, and afterwards subdued and won by his magnanimity. They ceased from that time their life of violence."

Road-making, bridge-making, the repairing annually of the destruction caused by winter storms, swollen streams and melting snows, the care of the schools, and the instruction of the adult population, as well as the children, in the elements of some of the natural sciences, geography, geology, chemistry, botany, etc., occupied Oberlin continually, while his correspondence with persons in different countries outside his canton was constantly enlarged. But, above all, his

concern was for the spiritual and eternal life of all those to whom he was called to minister in the Gospel.

The journal entitled "L'Eglise Libre," published at Nice, produced, during the year 1873, a series of the hitherto unpublished discourses of Oberlin. These fragments are of unequal merit; those extracted from his sermons preached under the form of popular lectures during the period of the Revolution when public worship was forbidden, are perhaps the most striking; all, however, bear the imprint of the truthful, earnest, and affectionate character of the preacher. It may not be amiss to quote here a portion of one of the sermons published by the "Eglise Libre," and delivered a few years after Madame Oberlin's death, and previous to the Revolution. During these years, Oberlin appears to have made great progress in the Christian life; he followed with ardour the injunction, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." "Thousands of times," he writes in his diary, "have I besought the Lord that I might be able to surrender myself wholly and entirely to His will for life and for death, and that He would bring me to such a state of oneness with Him, as that I may never think, wish, say, do, or plan anything but what He, the all-wise and all-holy, desires and wills." Love for the souls of the people, and for humanity at large, deepened and increased in him. He was much in prayer, continually making intercession for souls. In one of the sermons just mentioned, preached in 1789, he expressed himself thus on the subject of intercession:—

"I wish to propose to you all, disciples and apprentices of Jesus Christ, the following subjects of intercession. First, ask of God that He will deign to awaken every heart in the Ban de la Roche to a keen desire and concern for the one thing needful. Then present before God every family of our community, one after the other, omitting none, then every member of each family, one after the other, so that none may be forgotten, and that every soul may be animated by a lively desire for the good of every other soul, and for the one thing needful for all.

"To the friends of God and the experienced in prayer, I would propose also that they should intercede for the widows, widowers, and bereaved members of our community, that God would draw them all very near to Jesus, and that the heart-rending grief through which they may have passed may not be lost on them, but may attract and drive them strongly heaven-ward, and that the wound caused by separation from those they love may not be healed except by regeneration and sanctification. Present all these persons to God in prayer, not only *en masse*, and in public prayer, but each separately and individually by every one of you in his own chamber, embracing thus all the members of our community."

In another sermon of nearly the same date apparently, headed "La Grande Cimetière," on the subject of the vision of Ezekiel—the valley of dry bones—he thus spoke:—

"This vision is an emblem of the natural condition of man on earth. Here you see what a village, a parish, a province, an empire is; it is a great cemetery full of human bones. You see, indeed, men and women, young and old, all occupied, working, busy; but they are all busy about what is perishing and worthless; they are all like fireworks or *ignes fatui*, which fly hither and thither, carried in the air, and seem to have life in them, while they have none. For that which is indispensable to true happiness they have neither desire nor hope. To become rich, to live easily and pleasantly from day to day, or, it may be, in debauchery and self-indulgence, this is what they are seeking

after ; but to please God, to possess Him who is the source of all true riches, of true repose, and of inexhaustible happiness,—this never enters into their ideas. In short, the world is an immense cemetery, a charnel-house, strewed with dry bones. This it is which caused the heart of our loving Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ to be so penetrated with pity and sorrow. This it was which drew Him down to earth, which dwelt in His thoughts all the day long, and which caused Him to spend His nights in prayer. He set Himself to obtain by instant prayer the vivification of these dead men.

"It may often have seemed to Him that His prayers were lost,—that His anguish, His tears, His sufferings were in vain, because He saw not yet the fruit of them. But the seed of His intercession was striking root unseen under the soil ; it germinated silently, and at last bore fruit a thousand fold. Let the disciples of Jesus take courage from His example, and redouble their prayers and intercessions for all *their own*, for their families, and their friends, and for members of the community who are still spiritually dead.

"Let no one say, 'It is in vain ; the people for whom I wear myself out in prayer, prostrated before God's throne, remain always the same.' Go on, dear soul ; do not lose courage ; if thy prayer is persevering, it will be effectual. It is at harvest-time only that we see the ripened grain.

"Learn what it means to *pray in the name of Jesus Christ.* It is to second Him by your instant prayers, and to aid Him in raising to life the dead which cover the face of the earth. Learn what manner of person a fellow-worker with God is. He is a person who, however miserable and useless he may deem himself to be, cares for the salvation of others, and labours night and day in his secret heart to obtain the conversion of those whom he knows, taking them one by one, and presenting them with instant prayer before God. Learn also what St. Paul meant when he said that if one portion of the bread be consecrated, the rest will be holy also. That is to say, that however worldly, irreligious, corrupt in every way a family may be, provided there is in that family a single awakened soul consecrated to Christ, devoted to His service, and penetrated with His spirit

of charity, that one so set on fire with love will not cease to pray, to groan, to intercede in private for all his relations, family, and friends, until all are awakened, all converted, all set on fire with Divine love.

"Finally, learn to understand who they are who are the first-fruits and the *first-born*, whose dwelling-place is the Hill of Zion, where reigneth the living God and the Lord Jesus Christ, the angels and archangels, the saints and the spirits of the just made perfect. Oh, whoever among you, my dear hearers, is awakened and moved by God, become you first-fruits, first-born among many brethren, and fellow-workers with Christ. You *can* become such by interceding continually for all those who are not yet made alive, who are not yet loving and obedient disciples of the Lord Jesus."

Oberlin was himself so impressed with the duty of praying with reality and earnestness for all who asked his prayers, and for those also who asked not, and so afraid of forgetting any one of them, that he wrote their names with chalk on the black oak door of his private room. It cannot be wondered at that such results as are recorded should have followed the faithful and constant waiting upon God of such a man. His youngest daughter, Fréderica Bienvenue, testified thus to the spiritual condition of the Ban de la Roche during the later portion of her father's life: "The inhabitants of all the villages appear to be moved by some silent and spontaneous motive and power. They assemble themselves together in the evenings; when, after reading some verses from the Bible, they all kneel and join together in imploring the blessing of God and the gift of the Holy Spirit for their own village, and then for all the villages, and for every soul in them, as well as upon every means

adopted for spreading the knowledge of Christ, and for bringing the people nearer to God. At the end of these meetings they generally make a collection, which is reserved till the time comes for transmitting it to any of those missionary or other societies whose reports show that they are most in need."

The Breath of God had indeed called to life the dead of *this* cemetery. This moral wilderness had been made to "rejoice and blossom as the rose;" while its inhabitants had learned to care for the needs and sufferings of mankind at large, and to pray that the knowledge of the Lord might cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION—ABBÉ GREGOIRE—THE HARBOURING OF FUGITIVES—SOME OF HIS PARISHIONERS JOIN THE ARMY—SERMON TO THEM—PRAYER—HIS SON FREDERIC ENLISTS—DIES AT WISSEMBOURG—OBERLIN EVADES ACT SUPPRESSING PUBLIC WORSHIP—HIS ADDRESSES ON TYRANTS AND THE REPUBLIC—HE REDEEMS THE ASSIGNATS—THE BOOK OF FRIENDSHIP—SUMMONED TO STRASBOURG—LICENSED AS A WHEELWRIGHT—LETTER TO THE SOCIÉTÉ POPULAIRE—SERIOUS ILLNESS.

THE echoes of the great political storm which burst over France in 1791, now began to be heard even in the remotest portions of the Department of the Lower Rhine.

The principles and views with regard to the republican form of government which animated Oberlin, are chiefly developed in his correspondence with the famous Abbé Gregoire. It is scarcely necessary, at the present day, to remind English readers that the broad principles of the famous "Declaration of the rights of man" ought ever to be held entirely distinct from the excesses which accompanied the Revolution, and the anarchy which resulted from and succeeded the evils of the *ancien régime* in France. The principles of that Declaration are practically identical with those upon which our own constitution is founded. These principles, as M. Stœber, the biographer of

Oberlin, expresses it, "tended to restore the dignity of man, to break the chains of feudalism, to emancipate agriculture and industry, to replace privilege by equality before the law, and arbitrary government by constitutional liberty." Stœber goes on to say: "Such principles necessarily found an echo in the generous heart of the man who lived for the good of the people."

Oberlin hailed with joy the new order of things, while regarding with horror every kind of excess. A zealous Christian and a most unselfish citizen, he continually impressed upon the people the duties of citizenship, and "encouraged patriotic sentiments as much as he did Christian virtues." Patriotism became a kind of worship among the honest mountaineers, who happily escaped the influence of the libertinism and godlessness which swept like a wave over France.

The Abbé Gregoire, Bishop of Blois, was a prominent figure in those turbulent times. His career was characterised by an "ardent love of liberty, active philanthropy and inflexible integrity." He was a member of the States General in 1789, and was one of the five ecclesiastics present at the session of the Tennis Court. He never failed to express his strong opinion in the Constituent Assembly on the subject of civil and religious liberty, and he supported those opinions by the most powerful eloquence. He was one of the early advocates of the abolition of negro slavery, and was also a friend of the persecuted Jews. For these things alone he deserves a place among the

friends of humanity. He was the first among the French clergy to take the constitutional oath. It was he who brought forward in the Convention the motion for the abolition of the monarchy. He never concealed his earnest desire to do away with royalty; at the same time, he made strenuous efforts to save the person of the king. Finding, after many attempts, that it was impossible to do so in any other way, he brought forward a proposition for the abolition of the punishment of death. He abstained from voting on the trial of the king, and refused to sign the letter of his three colleagues demanding the sentence of death. Throughout, his conduct was characterised by bold independence and firm adhesion to his principles, which were the fruit of deep conviction. During the Reign of Terror, when the Bishop of Paris resigned his episcopacy, and several of the clergy were driven to abjure the Christian faith, the Abbé Gregoire had the courage to resist the storm of invective from the tribune, and threats from the Mountain. His words of protest are well known: "Are sacrifices required for my country?" he said; "I am accustomed to make them. Are the revenues of my bishopric wanted? I give them up without a regret. Is religion the subject of your discussions? That is far beyond your jurisdiction. I demand the freedom of religious worship." Although he consented to sign, with Talleyrand, in 1814, the invitation to the Bourbons on which the monarchy was restored, yet, on the restoration of the Bourbons, in 1819, he was excluded from the Institute, and from his episcopal see; and on his

re-election to the Chamber of Deputies, he was deprived of his seat by the Royalist majority. From that time forward, he devoted himself to humanitarian and literary labours.

His acquaintance with Oberlin was due to the fact that the Ban de la Roche had become a place of pilgrimage, visited by persons of different countries and opinions, who desired to see the successful work carried out by Oberlin, of which the report was now spreading far and wide. Amongst the intimate friends of Oberlin who visited him were several Catholic *curés;* of these Abbé Gregoire was one of the most distinguished. Before the troubles of the Revolution, he had, like Oberlin, worked in an independent spirit, and with much Christian zeal in his pastoral character; he also had much success in elevating his people intellectually as well as spiritually. The abbé wrote thus in describing a journey among the Vosges Mountains:—

"All hail to Oberlin, the learned and brave minister! His morals have been calumniated, but the esteem, love, and confidence of his parishioners, and all the neighbouring Catholics, show how untrue is all that has been said against him. Let us, zealous clergymen, be just, and declare that the conduct of the minister of Waldersbach is an example and a reproach to many Catholic clergy, as well as to many Protestant ministers of Alsace. He has done great things for education; and one is astonished in this wild country of the Ban de la Roche, to find amongst the peasants a judgment so highly cultivated, a delicacy of sentiment, a politeness and a purity of morals which one rarely finds in cities. M. Oberlin cultivates also the arts; he teaches the children drawing, and flower-painting, and music; he also apprentices them to various

trades. Botany is taught here, especially in its relation to medicine; the pastor is most laborious, and well instructed; he has drawn up and engraved a map of his canton; in fact, he leaves nothing undone which can be done for the good of the people. The roads of the canton, which were formerly in a very bad state, he has himself made sound."

These two men lived on terms of the greatest friendship, first, during times of peace and calm, and afterwards during the stormy days of the Revolution. They had frequent prolonged discussions and arguments on the different tenets of the Christian faith, and on the differences of opinion which existed between them. The abbé ardently desired that Oberlin should share his views. Oberlin replied to his arguments with the full strength of the conviction which animated him. Their frequent controversies, however, never separated them in the least, nor interfered with the warmth of their friendship.

Many of the inhabitants of Alsace, including members of Oberlin's own family, were seriously affected by the turbulent events in France during the years of the Revolution, and of the flight eastward of thousands of the Royalist party to Germany and Belgium.

The vast emigration of the aristocracy of France, which began in 1789, and continued for several years, caused a continual passing to and fro through Alsace and Lorraine; and the little Presbytère of Oberlin became a place of refuge for persons of all parties. Some members of the aristocracy of the Lower Rhine, in terror lest they should be suspected

of sympathy with the emigrants, fled to the mountains of the Ban de la Roche. Some of these were guests for a considerable time in the family of Oberlin. He received, during this period, many persons of distinction, of various religious and political parties, who all received a cordial and open-hearted welcome, as individuals requiring help and Christian sympathy.

It is said that one of the principal actors in the most violent scenes of the Revolution, whose name is not mentioned, was among those who took refuge in the Ban de la Roche. It is also stated that during his residence there, under the influence of Oberlin, he seemed "entirely to have lost his sanguinary nature, and to have exchanged the fierceness of the tiger for the gentleness of the lamb."

A young lady of one of the aristocratic families of Alsace, known for her piety and good works, was amongst the solitary fugitives who found their way to the house of Oberlin. A band of armed police commissioners appeared, as was not unfrequently the case, with a search-warrant to find suspected persons who had fled to this mountain retreat. They arrived at the little Presbytère, and imperiously demanded to know where Mlle. —— was to be found. Oberlin had anticipated this visit, and having become deeply attached to the young refugee, he had determined to protect her to the last. Now, however, all hope seemed to be gone. He replied: "You can search the house." The moment the men left the room he fell on his knees, and cried in anguish to God:

"Thou who art a very present help in time of trouble, hear now my prayer! All things are possible with Thee! Save this precious life! I see not how it may be done; but Thou canst do it!"

The young lady had retired to her little bedroom at the top of the house; the men impatiently ransacked every room, and approaching this one last of all, they flung the door wide open, entering with rude violence. Mlle. —— had at that moment gone behind the door to take down a towel which hung there on a nail, in order to dry her hands, which she had just washed. The door, being flung violently back, threw her against the wall, concealing her altogether from view. She remained there, perfectly still; the men looked round the room, and believing it to be entirely empty, left the house with murmurings of disappointment. When the last sound of their footsteps had died away, Oberlin assembled his family and guests, as was his wont, and offered up thanks to God for this wondrous interposition, and for the preservation of the life of the beloved guest.* On another occasion, officers having arrived with a search-warrant, Oberlin was obliged to allow them to enter every room in his house. They seemed to have been somewhat awed on entering his private room, dedicated to study and prayer, and to have been touched by his gentle courtesy. Having looked all round the room, they retired, with apologies for having been obliged to disturb his studies, and encroach on his privacy, and

* The above incident was related to the compiler of this biography by Professor Christlieb, of Bonn.

so left the house. In a wardrobe in that same room was concealed, at that very moment, a gentleman on whose head a price had been set, and for whom the Revolutionary Government was making diligent and anxious search.

An appeal was made to the patriotism of the French youth for the defence of their country against the Royalist allied armies. The Ban de la Rochois were among the first to respond to this appeal. Our friend Oberlin was troubled in spirit. On the one hand, his own military ardour urged him to applaud and encourage the zeal of the young volunteers ; while on the other, his fatherly and tender feelings towards these young men caused him a sharp pang at seeing them about to depart, perhaps never to return. Some of them had been amongst the turbulent, half-savage youths who had been tamed by his frank and holy influence, and who were now diligent cultivators of the soil. Others were very young, and had never been beyond the confines of their valleys and mountains. Oberlin thought with anxiety of the change they were about to make from their quiet rural life, to the license of camps and the horrors of war. He gave himself much to prayer on their behalf, and as the day for their departure approached, he gathered the inhabitants of the valleys together to a solemn service in the church at Waldbach, on 5th August, 1792. The following is an extract from the address he then made to the volunteers :—

"My dear friends ! I am rejoiced to think that we can present ourselves together in this house of prayer before your departure.

You are going to leave us; but our prayers will accompany you. May God grant that not one among you may prove unworthy or incapable of receiving the full blessing, protection, and deliverance of the Eternal God our heavenly Father! Make every effort, dear friends, in order that our prayers for you may not return to us void, and to this end walk always as in the presence of God. Let His word be a precious thing to you, and your daily nourishment. Every morning, recall to your mind some passage of it, which will dwell within your hearts during the day. Be kind one to another; and render to each other all reciprocal services. Refrain from all excess in wine; abstain also from hot disputes. He is the wisest who gives way first in any altercation.

"Seek honour and renown by following all that is most pleasing to God. You have received enlightenment, and an education superior to that which many of your comrades in arms have received. Let these comrades see, then, by your example, that in every position of life there are no more excellent men on earth than those who know and follow the precepts of the Gospel.

"Try to be useful to every one. Be prudent and foreseeing. Never be ashamed of any work, provided it is honest and useful work. Remember ever that our God—the God of the constitution of France—the God of armies and of victories—is a God of love. He will be with you as He was with the warrior David. He will protect you as He did him, arming you with courage, endurance, faith, and peace of soul, if, like David, you give yourself up to be led by the Spirit of God.

"When you have to suffer, suffer without murmuring; complaining does not alleviate pain, but only embitters it.

"Accept all as from the hand of God; it is He who measures out all things—all good things, and all sorrows and afflictions which fall to our lot.

"When in the enemy's country, never forget that we are not the enemies of the people. The French princes, the Royal emigrants, the King of Prussia, and the Emperor, are the enemies of our country; but their subjects are in no way our enemies. These latter, the common soldiers, are to be pitied like yourselves, inasmuch as the tyranny of their princes has

dragged them into the misfortunes of war. Be therefore always full of compassion towards them, always just; and be helpful to them when you can.

"May God be with you in foreign lands, and may He restore you to your families, with honour, and in prosperity; and, if any one of you is destined to meet his death, and to find his grave in a foreign soil, be assured that that one will find without doubt, that the country and place to which God and duty have called him, is always the one which is nearest heaven."

Oberlin then said: "Let us kneel, friends, and pray;" and thus he prayed: "O our God, behold us here ready before Thee to answer to the call of our country. Be with us, as Thou wast with Thy people Israel." After continuing to ask for the Divine blessing for those who were going forth, and those who remained at home, the strong feeling of his heart broke forth in the following almost bitter cry against wars and their causes:—

"O God! the God of Hosts! why, why must men make war upon each other? If men must fight, surely it is only against ferocious wild beasts, and against wicked and violent men who resemble wild beasts, that they should take up arms, in order to prevent their ravages, or rid the earth of them. But these poor people, Lord, whom our enemies the princes and kings of the earth are setting in battle-array against us, what have they done? They are not ferocious wild beasts, nor violent and wicked men. No! it is their sanguinary leaders alone who deserve that name. O merciful God, have pity on these innocent and down-trodden people! Save, guard, and protect them! Open the eyes of the selfish princes who kindled this war, and make them to regard with horror the crime of which they are guilty. Convert them! Oh, convert all sinners! Bring back the erring. Let the world return to Thee by the exercise of pity, justice, and clemency, that all may dwell in peace under

the blessed government of our august Saviour, the King of Kings. O eternal God, establish Thy reign on earth!"

Oberlin's solicitude followed the volunteers long after their departure. When in distress, and wanting the bare necessities of life, he diligently collected for them money, clothing, appliances of every kind, and had these faithfully conveyed to the sufferers, wherever they were.

He was soon to be called to a yet more deep and intimate participation in the sorrows of those who suffered through the war. His eldest son, Frederic, then a student at Strasbourg, and living with his uncle, the philologist, could not resist the infection of the prevailing enthusiastic patriotism of the Alsatian youth, and asked and obtained his father's leave to enlist under the flag of liberty. He entered the third battalion of the Lower Rhine. He was elected by the votes of his comrades quartermaster-corporal (*caporal-fourrier*). He entered eagerly upon his new duties. His good conduct, zeal, intelligence, and courage, won him the esteem and friendship alike of the senior officers and of his younger comrades. But his career was destined to be brief. He fell ill, through exposure, and obtained leave to return to his father's home. When partially recovered, he determined to return to the army. Though weak, and scarcely able to march, he set out. "Duty calls me," he said.

At the battle of Bergzaberm, in August, 1793, he was standing by the colours of his corps; the sun was hot, and the fighting was fierce; a call was made for an officer to volunteer to give out cartridges in a

position very much exposed to the fire of the enemy. Frederic did not hesitate a moment in offering himself; but he had scarcely stepped into the place in which he had volunteered to serve when a ball struck him; entering at one hip, it passed through his body to the other. He fell, and was carried to the house of the Pastor Kreiss, at Wissembourg, where he was tenderly cared for. But the wound was mortal, and he died in a few hours, at the age of twenty-one.

The news of his death was carried by a special messenger to Oberlin. He and his family were not unprepared for the blow; no cry of consternation, of rebellion, or of unmitigated woe, was heard in that household, although deep and tender grief penetrated the hearts of all—father, sisters, and brothers. The following letter of Mr. Heisch reveals in a few brief words the sorrow of that Christian family, who "sorrowed not as those that have no hope," and whose grief was far removed from the despair of loving hearts to whom death is the end of all, and who have no belief in the life beyond:—

"I came to Waldersbach," wrote Mr. Heisch, "soon after the death of Frederic Oberlin. I expected to find the family all in tears. This was not the case, however. A gentle and holy sadness prevailed, but no hopeless grief. They all spoke of their beloved Frederic, not as one who was dead, whose loss they deplored, but as a comrade who had left this country to go to another, and whom, infallibly, they would meet again by-and-by. The grief of his absence, certainly, was bitterly felt, but they comforted each other with the thought of seeing him again. A religious silence and calm seemed to brood over that peaceful house, but that which reigned and triumphed above all was the *faith of a Christian family*."

And ever after they continued still to reckon their family as *seven*, and to talk of Frederic as of a son and brother absent for a time in a foreign country.

The French Revolution, which, in the prophetic words of Mirabeau, was "destined to make the tour of the world," was marching on with giant steps. The good but weak King Louis XVI. had expiated on the scaffold the crimes of his predecessors, and the National Convention had taken the place of the Legislative Assembly. Its first session was held on 20th September, 1792. Monarchy, abolished already in fact, was now abolished by a solemn decree, voted upon the proposition of the venerable Abbé Gregoire. The abbé wrote the following letter to Oberlin at this time:—

PARIS, 21*st August*,
"YEAR II. OF THE REPUBLIC.

"MY DEAR OLD FRIEND,—It was delicious to me to receive news from you. You are always present to my heart. Never can I forget the hours we have spent together. Most earnestly do I hope they may be renewed. So long as I can be of use in the position to which Providence has called me, I will remain in it. I confess to you, however, that I look forward with strong esire to the time when I can return to my native place, and retire to some solitude, with God for my companion and confidant, and with some few friends at hand whom I know I can sometimes see. My brave Oberlin is of the number of those. Oh, when shall I be able to quit this whirlwind of public business? I shall, however, have lived to see the infamous race of kings extirpated from our country. Hate them, my friend! hate them well! for they have never done anything, never do anything, never will do anything but harm in the world! I declare to you I should prefer the ten plagues of Egypt to the plague of a king. I shudder when I think of the horde of crowned villains. Health and happiness to all in the Ban de la Roche.

Write to me sometimes ; give me some details of your schools, of the progress of morality, of spiritual life, and of industry in your canton, and be sure that I *love you as much as I hate kings ;* that is to say, to the degree of furnace heat.

" GREGOIRE."

Oberlin, as a true republican, delighted to style himself a " pastor-citizen." His republican principles were destined to be sorely tried ; but they remained firm to the end. The political horizon of France became more and more threatening and gloomy ; the great storm of the Reign of Terror was about to break over the land. The Catholic priesthood had discredited their religion ; the reaction set in, and the churches were ordered to be closed. The decree of the Convention commanding the immediate cessation of every form of religious worship reached the Ban de la Roche in 1793. From this time forward the ministry of the good pastor, it seemed, must cease, and his people were exceedingly troubled. Oberlin called together the members of the municipality of Waldbach, and other trusted friends, and formed them into a committee. The National Convention encouraged, and even ordained the formation of popular clubs and " societies for mutual enlightenment." Oberlin called his committee together to propose the formation of a club, and thus addressed them : " I, with all other ministers of religion throughout France, have been forbidden by the Revolutionary Government of Robespierre, to exercise any ministerial functions ; but I am permitted to establish a club. Now," said Oberlin, "you see that by the decree of the National Convention

we of the Ban de la Roche, as of all other parts of France, are forbidden to assemble ourselves in church; but every commune, our own amongst them, is to choose itself a president, to preside over the popular association of the commune. An orator is to be chosen by the president; and this orator is, on certain days, to pronounce a public discourse upon some moral or patriotic subject. These subjects will be prescribed by the Government itself."

The meeting immediately proceeded to the execution of the plans suggested by Oberlin. First of all, they named as their president the schoolmaster of the district, Sebastian Scheidecker. This choice was received with immense applause. Next, an orator must be elected. The votes were unanimous in favour of Oberlin. A double round of applause welcomed this choice, as though it had been altogether a new and original idea. "Now," said Oberlin, "we are directed to choose a hall for our assemblies, and also to fix the day upon which these meetings shall take place. Now, the house of our citizen-president has only one room, which would not be large enough; especially if we consider that women as well as men ought to attend. There is no room large enough, certainly, in the old Presbytère. In my opinion, there is not in the whole of the Ban de la Roche a building so convenient for our purpose as that which was formerly devoted to public worship." This proposition was carried with great enthusiasm. "The church! let it be the church!" they replied. "With regard to the day of assembly," Oberlin continued, "we cannot

choose Monday, Wednesday, or Friday, because many of you go to the Strasbourg market on those days. There are objections to the intervening days also. How would you approve of our choosing the old day we used to name Sunday, and that we should assemble at nine o'clock in the morning?" This proposition was also unanimously accepted.

The next Sunday the whole mass of the inhabitants repaired as usual to the church. The citizen-orator entering, formally laid aside, as he was commanded to do by the decree of the Convention, his gown and bands, and, standing in the middle of the church, asked the meeting to vote as to which part of the building he should speak from. "Evidently the pulpit seems the most convenient," was the reply; and he ascended the pulpit. Thus the Sunday morning service remained practically the same as before, so far as preaching was concerned.

On one of the early days of this assembly the subject decreed for popular oratory was, "The hatred of tyrants and the means of getting rid of them." Oberlin thus spoke :—

"Citizens, according to this decree I must speak to you against tyrants; and it is our duty further to consult together for their destruction. Here, in these peaceable valleys, we have certainly no tyrants of the kind of which we read in political history. It would, therefore, be superfluous for us to speak of those; but I can tell you of, and describe to you some tyrants, who exist not only in these valleys, but even in our hearts. These tyrants are avarice, impurity, hatred, malice, impiety, and egotism. Now, those are the tyrants against which I am going to speak, and I shall indicate to you also the best means of

combating and destroying these tyrants, the one only means, in fact—faith in Jesus Christ."

From this point Oberlin went on to pronounce one of his most powerful discourses. When he had concluded, he proposed that they should sing together some national air, with suitable words. They chose one of the Psalms.

It was in this quaint but firm manner that this faithful servant of God continued to some extent to minister to the souls who had been entrusted to his care. These meetings continued from week to week, and the inhabitants of the valleys rejoiced in them. Many persons from neighbouring communes, in which all religious worship had come to an end, flocked to Waldbach, in order to attend these ministrations of the good citizen-pastor, and to join in the praises of God. The aspect of the valleys during the first part of this epoch was one of peace and calm, while in many other parts of France there reigned only anarchy and terror.

Another of the subjects prescribed by the Convention as a suitable theme for oratory was, "The Republic."

"To-day," said Oberlin, "we are called upon to celebrate the *fête de la Jeunesse*. I shall speak to you of the principles of the Republic, and of what it is to be a true Republican. I desire that every member of the French Republic should be animated by truly republican sentiments; that they should understand that the public happiness constitutes private happiness; that each private individual should live for the good of the community, and that God approves us only when we love our neighbours as ourselves.

"(1) We are true republicans when we neither live nor act

nor undertake anything—the choosing of a profession or the settling in family life—except for the public good.

"(2) We are true republicans when, for the love of our country, we endeavour to imbue the minds of our children with generous motives to all, resulting in good works and a life filled with activity, the end and object of which is the public good.

"(3) We are true republicans when we teach our children the love of nature and of true science; and endeavour to preserve them from that egotistical and self-interested spirit which seems at the present day to dominate our people of France—who, notwithstanding that they have sworn regard to each other, and promised to love each other as brethren, have, for the greater part of them, no regard except for themselves, and do nothing for the public except what they are forced to do. Let this infernal anti-republican and anti-Christian spirit be far from us! Oh! my young fellow-citizens, may you be counted henceforth amongst the active benefactors of your country! Oh! that you may render yourselves worthy of this honourable title of republican by endeavouring to devote to the public good and to the general happiness your powers of mind and body, your talents, and your leisure; by acquiring the light of philosophy and science, and, above all, by seeking that new and generous heart, divinely enlightened, which God can give you. You will then become dear both to man and to God, who will protect you and cause all your undertakings to prosper; and will one day recompense your fidelity with honour and glory, saying to you in the face of the universe: 'Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful in that which is least, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' O God! God of my country! grant prosperity to the republic, and bless all true republicans. Amen."

The Revolution gave to France the most excellent institution of Trial by Jury, derived from England. Oberlin admired it sincerely, as a "legislation of humanity, impartiality, and equality, worthy to be built on the ruins of the barbarous codes of the

ancien régime, to which so many innocent persons had fallen victims." The clergy, being now considered citizens equally with other men, were not exempt from serving as jurymen. Oberlin was frequently called to sit in the jury at Strasbourg; his contemporaries described how he "loved to mix himself up with his fellow-citizens," and spoke of the impression made and the sensible emotion displayed in the court at the sight of this eminent saint, this beloved pastor and friend of the people, sitting on the bench among the other jurymen. Justice could not wholly miscarry, it was thought, where such an influence formed even a twelfth part of the judicial body.

A striking illustration of Oberlin's generosity and patriotism, considering his poverty, was the point he made of buying up the assignats (the paper-money of the Revolution, which afterwards lost its credit, and was never redeemed) whenever they appeared in his parish.

"His fidelity in great and little things alike," says M. Le Grand, "was so scrupulous that he believed it to be his duty to God, in the remembrance of whose presence he habitually lived, to write every word which he wrote, and to *form every letter of every word with the utmost care*. When the assignats lost their value, he feared that this would bring evil upon France, and lessen the confidence of the people in the Government. Convinced that it was the duty of every citizen to labour as far as his influence permitted him to do so, to prevent such a calamity, he made a public sale every year of agricultural implements and other useful articles among his parishioners, or rather offered them in exchange for assignats. In this way he managed to redeem, in the space of twenty-five years, all the assignats of the Ban de la Roche, and some of the neighbouring communes.

He wrote: 'Thus, thanks be to God, my nation is honourably discharged at least of this obligation!' This faithful servant of God did not think the careful formation of a single letter in writing too small a thing, nor the redemption of thousands of assignats too laborious a thing to be done in the service of God."

The two years which followed were a time of severe trial for Oberlin, as for many other French patriots. The schools were closed; public worship was interdicted during the greater part of this time. It was only in the way above indicated that he was able, once a-week, under the shelter of the permission given to pronounce harangues on certain prescribed subjects, to speak to the people of the things of God. His labours in other ways, however, were greatly increased. Crowds of refugees continued to pour into this retreat. To these persons,—of all ranks and of the most varied political and religious opinions,—Oberlin is stated to have been a "visible providence." He laboured unceasingly among them, and to some he became the messenger of God in the deepest sense. They included the persecuted of all parties,—constitutional patriots, who had fled from Paris to escape the horrors of the reign of blood; Jacobins, whose own excesses or even crimes obliged them to fly for their lives; and members of many ancient patrician families of Alsace and elsewhere—the Berckheims, the Landspergs, the Debeyers, etc. Among those to whom he became the most intimately allied by ties of friendship was Madame Marianne, the wife of Louis Edelmann of Strasbourg, who, with his brother Frederic Edelmann, composer of the opera

"Ariane à Naxos" was arrested, taken to Paris, and guillotined. Among the papers preserved by the family of Oberlin, there is a "Book of Friendship," in which he was in the habit of asking his guests to write their names, with any observations they liked to make.

M. Perrier, Deputy at Paris, whose name was known and respected in France, was a refugee in the Ban de la Roche for a considerable time. On being recalled to his political duties in Paris, he wrote in the "Livre d'Amitié" the following:—

"Never can I forget that man,—thrice good, thrice saintly,—whom I have learned to know and admire in the heart of his peaceful valleys. I shall carry with me to the grave, and beyond the grave, the memory of that happy day in which this sanctuary amongst the mountains became the birthplace of my friendship with him. All those good and generous persons with whom, as a refugee, I shared the delight of the friendship of a man who was made perfectly happy by his faith and by his beneficence, have always felt, like myself, that the path chosen by him is the true path of happiness. They, like myself, have resolved to direct their own steps in that path; they, like myself, have been stimulated to form resolutions to become better men. The remembrance of Oberlin will be for us an encouragement to good and a protection against evil. His image—always enshrined in our hearts—will cast out or petrify all vain phantoms of earthly ambition, all unholy pleasures, and all fatal passions. It will elevate our thoughts and inspire our hopes. Oh, venerable Oberlin, thou art dear to me as a friend, and as a father I respect thee. I thank Heaven here in thy presence that I was permitted to be brought into the circle of thy friends at the very moment when I was about to launch upon a stormy sea. Deign, I beseech thee, to follow me by thy prayers and by thy counsels in the midst of the dangers which await me. Pray that I may be preserved in the paths of religion, of purity, and of honour,

as one of the children of God who aims after good, but is constantly inclined towards evil. Adieu, my father,—my friend! may the blessing of Heaven rest upon thy house!—may peace ever dwell in thy heart, and if I should never again see thee in this life, accept the 'rendezvous' which I desire to make with thee in that other life wherein will be reunited all those who are disciples of the one Master. If any of those dear friends with whom I lived in bonds of intimacy during our exile in the Ban de la Roche should read these lines, and should have the privilege of seeing the venerable Oberlin again on this earth, while I am not permitted to do so, will they be gracious enough to recall to him the memory of a young man who never can forget him, and who, though far off, turns often in thought and affection towards the valleys that he blessed by his presence?

AUGUSTIN PERRIER."

"13*th Frimaire*, *Year* III."

M. Perrier was called to take part, immediately on his return to Paris, in the exciting scenes of that time. His subsequent career, and his public and private life, proved that he had not forgotten the impressions received during his residence in the Ban de la Roche.

Oberlin was summoned to Strasbourg to make a formal confession of his religious and political faith. The summons was worded as follows:—

"BARR, 21 *Frimaire*, *the Year* II.

"In consequence of directions received from Citizen Martin, Commissary of the Committee of Public Safety for the Department of the Lower Rhine, we require that Citizen Oberlin of Waldersbach shall appear on the 25th of this month before the said Committee, at Strasbourg, in order to make his confession of faith, and to explain his manner of thinking and of acting in relation to the present religious and political revolution.—Signed for the Administration,

MÆRLIN, *V. P.*"

Oberlin repaired to Strasbourg accordingly, not without stern and sad reflections concerning the boasted *liberty*, certainly not granted now to the inmost thoughts of the heart. He there made the following "Profession de Foi Politique":—

"I have been requested by the Administrators of the Directory to explain my manner of thinking and of acting in relation to the political and religious revolution. I am not aware on what points my explanations are especially asked. I approve unreservedly the rigorous measures by which the infamous gambling in assignats was put a stop to. I respected the assignats as a happy method, as I believed, of saving the country from bankruptcy. I approve unreservedly the abolition of all vain ceremonies, and the banishment of everything in religion which is sterile and unfruitful, or the cause of divisions. I always made it a rule to limit myself in my instructions to what I deemed would render my fellow-citizens enlightened, brave, industrious, good patriots, good fathers, good soldiers, zealous republicans, faithful and commendable in every position of life. The gown and bands which I formerly wore I publicly laid aside many months ago, in presence of the whole people assembled. I always had a repugnance to these useless marks of office. My opinion concerning the monarchy is that it should be absolutely abolished. For many years past I have endeavoured to instil republican sentiments into the minds of the people of my neighbourhood. WALDERSBACH, 23 *Frimaire, l'an* II. *de la Republique une et Indivisible.* JEAN FREDERIC OBERLIN, *Citoyen de Waldbach, au Ban de la Roche.*"

Oberlin had, perhaps, foreseen the fall of the clergy when he resolved, some years before this period, to master some form of handicraft himself, and to apprentice his children also to trades. He was already a skilled worker in several simple crafts, and

now, being obliged to seek some means of earning his daily bread and that of his family, he applied for and obtained a licence, which the new legislation required every one to take out, to work as a wheelwright and maker of agricultural implements. In itself, the principle which he encouraged at all times, of giving every young person a training in some kind of mechanical work, is an excellent one. He continually advised that every one, man or woman, should acquire some skill of this kind, so as to be able to fall back upon such honest labour in case of need.

The authorities of the Committee of Public Safety, whether themselves suspecting Oberlin's loyalty, or desiring to make his safety doubly secure, did not leave him long unmolested. Again they required of him a "certificate of citizenship" from his friends at Waldbach, who, in order to give him this certificate with authority, formed in Waldbach itself a "Committee of Public Safety." Their certificate was thus worded :—

"We, the members of the Committee of Public Safety of the Commune of Waldbach, hereby certify that the citizen, Jean Frederic Oberlin, aged fifty-two, has been a minister of the gospel in this place for twenty-six years, and that during that time he has been a man of exceptional goodness, devoting himself, all that he is, and all that he has, to the relief and instruction of the poor inhabitants, teaching us as well by his actions as by his discourses ; and that since the realisation of our great Constitution, he has accepted it with gladness, and encouraged our young men always to defend it ; he has also explained to us its principles, so that we might understand it and be intelligently loyal to it. His

character is that of a true Republican. In the belief here expressed, we deliver to him the present certificate."

The "public security" having been assured so far as it could be by repeated examinations of this harmless and beneficent man, he was allowed to pursue his work in peace for a time as an agricultural implement maker.

But the most trying events were yet to come. Even in the peaceful Ban de la Roche some of the unfavourable elements of the anarchical days of the Revolution were at work. Some members of a certain "People's Society" of Waldersbach began to look with a sinister eye on the good pastor. The fact of his possessing a domicile of so much importance in the valleys as the humble Presbytère, was supposed by them not to accord with the principle of equality to which allegiance had been sworn. A proposal was made to appropriate and sell his house, and divide among themselves the proceeds. It was to him, as a lover of justice, a cruel shock, but still more bitter as a blow dealt, not by an enemy, but by these his "companions, his own familiar friends." As soon as he heard of this proposal, he addressed to those who had made it a letter, in which he pleads his rights against the proposed outrage, citing, even as St. Paul was forced to do, his own past services to his people.

The following is the substance of the letter :—

"FREDERIC OBERLIN TO THE 'SOCIÉTÉ POPULAIRE' OF WALDBACH.

"CITIZENS,—I was as one who had been cast down from heaven when I heard of your intention to put up the old *cure*

for sale. This event has awakened in my mind such a succession of thoughts, that I was as it were stupified,—stunned. I cannot get over my astonishment. Here are one or two only of the thoughts which have presented themselves,—first—who will guarantee this deed? If to-day or to-morrow the National Convention should become still more convinced that one of the sources of revolution, of anarchy, of plunder, of sanguinary barbarities, and all the other horrors which have flooded our France, which have never been paralleled in history,—if, I say, the Convention should one day become convinced that one of the causes of these horrors is the corruption of the clergy, and the lack of good, enlightened and generous pastors, resulting in irreligion being placed *à l'ordre du jour* by Robespierre and his partisans; if the Convention then should seek to re-establish respect for the name of God and obedience to His laws, as the basis of the prosperity of the Republic, and if it should proceed to make reparation to faithful pastors for the outrages practised on them by the partisans of Robespierre,—what regret and annoyance it will cause you to be obliged to restore the stolen revenues of a poor *cure* which never was desired or coveted by any one. It was the generous Stuber and I who brought this neighbourhood into some credit before the world. Until then it was held in the greatest contempt. . . . Is it to your honour at this time, that you should make me the victim of my fatherly care for this place? . . . *Ah! when you were slaves, you protected my goods and my comfort, and now that you have liberty, and are free to act in accordance with the generous impulses of your own hearts, what do you show yourselves to be? Alas! how you have fallen away! This is what overwhelms me!* My parishioners have followed better the counsels of pastor Robespierre than they have followed those of their old pastor Oberlin. There is much babbling about the Republic, but the babblers are egotists nevertheless. Such is not the example I have given you. Whenever I had any money, I never used it for the deterioration of the position of others, but to ameliorate it. I employed it to build houses in which to establish schoolmasters for the commune; to furnish instruments for cultivating the ground; to build and repair churches; to construct roads everywhere;

to open to the outer world the entrance to the Ban de la Roche; to share with others the fruits of every enterprise; to encourage useful knowledge by prizes to our scholars; to train and house schoolmistresses; to provide books for the schools and for families; to extirpate mendicity; to help the poor; to re-establish credit; to pay off all debts, etc. Ah! do not sow for yourselves the seeds of future regrets. Nothing, and no man, can ever exempt you from the obligations of gratitude and honesty. Health and fraternity.

"OBERLIN."

The question appears to have been as to the sale of the old, and not the new Presbytère. The old house had been repaired, and continued to stand by the side of the new one, having become absolutely necessary to Oberlin as his family increased, and guests became more numerous, and space was required for a variety of occupations, as well as interviews, connected with the necessities and interests of his parish. It appears that this contemplated cruel outrage was never carried into execution. It is probable that the above letter brought the misguided to a better mind.

Oberlin's health was habitually good; he possessed great firmness of fibre and extraordinary nervous energy. Mental trouble was apt to affect his health more than any external privations or arduous work. During the winter of 1793 he frequently returned to his house much exhausted after a long day of ministering to the refugees scattered through the valleys. He was deeply troubled in thinking of the future of France. Horror at the excesses of the Reign of Terror took for a time a painful possession of his

mind and imagination. His countenance was pale and sad. With the Psalmist he exclaimed, "The floods of ungodliness made me afraid." He was an ardent patriot and a true Republican, and this only served to increase his sadness. That sadness might have been, and was, in fact, expressed in the sorrowful words of Madame Roland, "O liberty, what things are done in thy name!"

In January, 1794, he fell ill. He was reluctant to yield to the first symptoms; but fever set in,—then unconsciousness, with intervals of delirium. The fever assumed a malignant character, and his life for some time hung in the balance. Grief and consternation took possession of the people, and a stranger could not, at that time, have recognised the happy, cheerful Ban de la Rochois in the sad and silent people who waited day by day in anxious suspense for the end of their terrible trial. In his delirium, he was always gentle, and apparently still thinking and planning for others. No thoughts of the Reign of Terror and its scenes of blood appeared any more to visit his brain. That memory was mercifully wiped out; but he imagined himself engaged in some practical and arduous scheme for the people, and often distressed his kind nurse Louise, who watched him night and day, by calling to her to "bring him thousands and thousands of francs," to enable him to carry out the works he fancied himself engaged in.

His good constitution held out bravely. The crisis past, he recovered slowly, but without relapses. At the end of six or seven weeks, when scarcely able to

stand upright, he expressed his determination to go to the church. He managed to crawl there, supported by two of the elders of Waldbach ; and, having achieved the ascent of the little pulpit stair, he addressed a few loving words of evangelic exhortation to the people, who wept for joy at the sight of him, as of one raised from the dead in answer to their fervent prayers. He never had any other serious illness than this, except one, in 1811. With regard to this he wrote to a friend,—

"As for me, I am much better than I was before my sudden and dangerous attack, in which all the art of the doctors failed, God being pleased to act alone and without means, and to give to my people a strong proof of the efficacy of earnest prayer. I am now as strong as the fatigues of forty-five years' service in this rude climate among the mountains allows me to be. . . . . That which troubles me most is the great amount of work which assails and overwhelms me from all sides, and of which I can never fully accomplish more than a twentieth part."

CHAPTER VII.

ARREST—DEFENCE AT SELESTADT—RESTORATION OF PUBLIC WORSHIP—RESOLUTION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY—HENRY GOTTFRIED OBERLIN—THE GREAT LAW-SUIT—EMILIE CUMIER'S DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFECT'S VISIT—M. LE GRAND—AGENT IN FRANCE FOR THE BIBLE SOCIETY—SOPHIA BERNARD'S HOME FOR CHILDREN—VISIT OF PAUL DE MERLIN.

AS a reward for his faithful citizenship, Oberlin was arrested on the 28th July, 1794, by the order of the Revolutionary Government, together with his friend and colleague, M. Boeckel, Pastor of Rothau. The two friends were partaking of a frugal repast in Oberlin's house on the occasion of the baptism of one of the children of an inhabitant of the village. They were conversing merrily over their dish of traditional potatoes and milk, which formed the mid-day repast, when the Revolutionary Commissary of Police charged with the warrant entered the room. He was evidently embarrassed in the presence of Oberlin. Perhaps the eminent virtues of the Pastor, which were known to all, filled him with a certain awe; or, possibly, this intrepid Republican was not even without some feeling of alarm, knowing very well that, in case of need, the people of the valleys would defend their beloved Pastor at the risk of their

own lives. The Sansculotte Commissary, nevertheless, peremptorily ordered the immediate departure of the two men. Oberlin calmly, and with courteous grace, begged him to allow them a delay of twenty-four hours, in order to make the necessary arrangements for the journey. The Commissary granted this request. Consequently they started the next morning, accompanied by the Mayor and municipal officers of Waldersbach, who formed a kind of guard of honour. The prisoners passed down the valleys, watched with silent prayer by the people, and arrived at Selestadt, the place of their destination.

At this time almost all the pastors and curés of Alsace were already in prison, including the brother of Oberlin, the philologist. The prisons of Schirmeck, Strasbourg, and Selestadt were completely crowded; Oberlin and his friend were, therefore, consigned temporarily to a small inn. They were under the necessity, while here, of dining at the same table with the Commissioners of Police and the Administrators of the district, all furious Jacobins. These red-capped functionaries amused themselves on these occasions by addressing abusive and violent language to Oberlin, endeavouring by cajolery, threats, and even an approach to personal violence, to force him to abjure the Christian faith. The two Christian ministers remained firm. On one occasion, it is stated, Oberlin replied with "extreme vivacity," upon which "*a scene took place.*" The account of this scene is very brief, but it brings out one of the characteristics of Oberlin,—namely, the firmness, amounting to

obstinacy, which was invariably aroused in him by opposition, especially when that opposition touched upon his profound religious convictions. The rapidity of his speech, the fire and animation of his countenance and gestures, his indignation and courage and firmness, appear to have struck the Jacobins as something remarkable and unexpected in a preacher of the Gospel of Peace. He held his own with so much ability, with so much majesty of manner, and was so evidently supported by an invisible presence, that his enemies fell back, and left him henceforth in peace. The question arose as to whether the two prisoners should be transported with others to Besançon, to be placed there in one of the strongest prisons of France. But the firmness and grace of the prisoners imposed upon the authorities such an amount of respect that they decided not to remove them, and they were therefore retained only in the inn as before.

During these days of suspense some of the most terrible events of the climax of the Revolution were taking place. Great excitement prevailed in the town of Selestadt when a special messenger arrived bringing the news of the fall of Robespierre. That horrible engine of murder, the guillotine, which he had himself employed against so many, had now cut short his own life. The news fell like a thunderbolt upon the inhabitants of Alsace. It was the 9th of Thermidor on which were broken the chains of this hateful tyranny, and on which, at the same time, many noble victims were liberated. The chief magistrate of the district, M. Stamm, immediately ordered the libera-

tion of Oberlin and Boeckel, enjoining them to return at once to their homes. The following is the form of order:—

"I give order that the citizens, Oberlin of Waldersbach, and Boeckel of Rothau, return to their homes, until such time as the representatives of the people shall have pronounced a decision upon their fate. I charge the municipality of these two towns not in any way to disquiet or disturb the said citizens, under pain of being called to account for their personal responsibility.

"OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL AGENT,
"*14th Thermidor, Year II. of the Republic.*"

The chief biographer of Oberlin writes,—

"The arrest of Oberlin recalls to me a touching scene which I witnessed. I had arrived on some business at Waldbach, on the very day when the good Pastor had been carried away from his people. It was evening. I entered the Presbytère,—that dear house, that abode of peace, whose threshold I had never crossed without feeling my heart beat with an emotion of glad expectation or of gratitude. All was silent. I walked unnoticed through the court of the vestibule. No one was there. I knocked at the door of the porch of the 'rez de chaussée,' and, hearing no reply, I entered. There I found assembled in one room the children of Oberlin, good Louise, Catherine Gagnière, and several other persons. They were all on their knees, praying with great fervour, and with an abstraction of soul which prevented them hearing my approach. I immediately saw the situation; I also fell upon my knees and joined my prayers to theirs. We together called upon God to restore to us the beloved father of the canton."

It was thus that prayer was made unceasingly for Oberlin during this brief time of suspense and fear for him and his people, in the same way that prayer was made without ceasing of the church for St. Peter during his imprisonment,—and with the same results, for the Angel of the Lord was there also to deliver

those who put their trust in Him. In the midst of the most terrible time of the Reign of Terror, thoroughly appreciating the power of that revolutionary torrent which threatened to break down all before it, Oberlin never lost the tranquillity of soul and the faith in God which supported him in all the vicissitudes of life. His friend Stuber used to apply to him the following lines of Racine :—

> " Celui qui met un frein à la fureur des flots,
> Sait aussi des méchans arrêter les complots ;
> Soumis avec respect à la volonté sainte,
> Je crains Dieu, Abner, et n'ai point d'autre crainte."

The 22nd March, 1795 (year III. of the Republic), was, without doubt, one of the happiest days of Oberlin's life. After a year of interruption of all forms of public worship, he was again permitted to plead for Christ, to preach from his pulpit the doctrines and maxims of the Gospel. He was still, however, obliged to submit to the jealous legislation upon public worship which was established by the Directorate. The people of the villages flocked in great numbers to the re-opening of the church on that happy day. Their Pastor, though somewhat shaken in health by the fever which he had recently shaken off, and by the personal trials connected with his arrest, yet appeared never more strong or more full of joy than on this occasion. The sanguinary tyranny of Robespierre and Marat was now finally overturned. On the 9th Thermidor (July) " a new compact was concluded between humanity and liberty. Enough blood had been shed. From this time France laboured to

rebuild her political edifice upon more just and moderate principles. Virtue, morality, science, and the arts were no longer titles of proscription, and the modern vandalism began to recoil before the new civilisation. A social regeneration slowly began to work."

At this date the Government recognised the merits of Oberlin in a public and honourable manner. The following is an extract from the report of the National Convention of the 16th Fructidor:—

"A member of the Convention, while speaking of the means of public instruction to be used, and of making the French language universal, brought before the Assembly the following facts:—'In the department of the Lower Rhine there is a valley called the Ban de la Roche, composed of several communes, in which a very little while ago only a rude *patois* was spoken which was not understood by any beyond the villages. A venerable man named Stuber devoted himself to the civilising of this population. His labours were not unfruitful. He had for a successor a man called Oberlin, who carried out the designs of his predecessor with so much success that the children of the Ban de la Roche now learn the elements of physics, astronomy, botany, music, painting, and a great many other branches of knowledge useful to man. These good, brave men, although very poor, would feel themselves insulted if any pecuniary recompense were offered to them. It is believed that the recital of these facts concerning them, and the honourable mention here made, are the only rewards which could at all please those two friends of humanity, Stouber and Oberlin.' A proposition was brought forward and carried in the Assembly agreeing that this brief recital should be inserted in the verbal report of the transactions of the National Convention, and that a copy of it should be sent to Stouber and Oberlin."

Oberlin received a copy from his friend M. Ehrmann of Colmar, then a member of the Convention. It was accompanied by the following letter:—

"PARIS, 19 *Fructidor, Year II.*

"I hasten, dear friend and brother, to make you acquainted with the decree of the National Convention, which has shown that it knows how to appreciate such a man as you. The insertion of the resolution, which I here forward to you, in the report of the Convention, may assure you also that the Government is now persuaded that virtue and enlightenment are the true bases of public happiness, and that those who encourage them deserve to be mentioned as models to all Republicans. I know very well that no such resolution, no reiterated applause of the representatives of the people,—who, in fact, received the proposition with enthusiastic cheers,—are required to encourage you to continue in your good work. The approval of God follows you in all you do; and that is enough for you. Nevertheless, the esteem of your fellow citizens, the recognition of the representatives of a great people, and the consciousness of having deserved these, are a very legitimate fruit of your zeal, which has never ceased to be exerted for the profit of humanity. Accept my fraternal good wishes and sincere desires for the preservation in health and life of a citizen so useful as you are to the triumphant Republic.

"EHRMANN,
"Representative of the People."

The enforced cessation of all his courses of lectures and classes for instruction in various branches of knowledge was, as his biographer says, a "real torment to Oberlin." The following is the text of the permission sent to the Ban de la Roche for the re-establishment of all these useful works in the valleys:—

"LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY.

"*3rd of Pluviose,*
"*Year III. of the Republic.*

"In the name of the French people, I, Bailly, Representative of the People in the Department of the Higher and Lower Rhine, of Mont Terrible, Jura, and the Vosges, authorise the

citizen, Frederick Oberlin, to re-open his courses of modern history, astronomy, botany, etc. In so doing he will continue a work which will cause him to deserve still more the honourable mention which has just been made of him in the National Convention for what he has accomplished in twenty-seven years in favour of public education and civilisation."

The later years, and the beautiful old age of Oberlin, will be best described and illustrated by notices of his relations with his principal friends, with his son Henry, and with his other children, as well as by extracts from recitals published at different times by persons who visited him at the end of the last and the beginning of the present century.

Henry Gottfried Oberlin, son of the Pastor, deserves a special notice, so rich was his life in all good works. He was sent early to pursue his studies with his learned uncle at Strasbourg. He showed, while very young, a strong taste for natural science; but his father's narrow means prevented him pursuing these studies as his chief aim in life. In order to regain health after a severe strain at the gymnase at Strasbourg, he returned to his father's home for a time. It was during the height of the Reign of Terror when the little Presbytère was filled with proscribed persons. M. Stouber writes, "Henry was the child of the Republic, like all his comrades; and oh, how ardently he loved liberty and detested despotism,—the despotism of the leaders of the Revolution not less than any other. Vital Christianity appears to have been, so to speak, born in him, and to have grown with his years." He continued to study medicine and theology. But the conscription of 1799 dragged him, together with

many other students, from his peaceful life. The following notice was found amongst the papers of his father :—

"On the 27th November, 1799, my son Henry left Strasbourg with a haversack on his back, as a conscript. Not for a single moment has our dear boy ceased to experience the protection of the Heavenly Father to whom his earthly father commended him. Yes, the Angel of the Lord has encamped round about him, as about all who fear Him."

Henry was shortly afterwards nominated Health Officer to the corps, and sent in this capacity to the portion of the army stationed in Switzerland, commanded at that time by the celebrated Massena, whose brilliant successes afterwards aroused the hostility of the fierce Muscovites. This journey to his new post was a very agreeable one for him. He met continually on his way friends of his father, who welcomed him for his father's sake. At Colmar and Mulhouse he was received with open arms by friendly families; also at Bâle, where he again fell ill. At Zurich he became acquainted with Lavater, who afterwards addressed several letters to him, as was his wont, in hexameter verses. The delicate state of his health which followed the fatigues of his service in the army, and the sadness of heart which took possession of him in witnessing the fruits of that horrible scourge of humanity—war—weighed so heavily upon him that he was obliged to leave the army, and again returned to the Ban de la Roche. Shortly afterwards, however, he passed a brilliant examination, and took his degree as Doctor of Medicine. He became, nevertheless, a

pastor, practising medicine at the same time. For some time he was Superior of the Protestant Seminary of St. William, at Strasbourg. In 1808 he was offered the appointment of tutor to the children of Colonel Richter, a Russian gentleman living at Riga. As he loved travelling and the sight of foreign countries, he readily accepted this position. He there made the acquaintance of the celebrated Madame Krudner, who exercised a powerful influence over his religious conceptions, and perhaps not altogether a happy one, considering the sensitive mind of this young man. During the blockade of Strasbourg, in 1814, he pursued with zeal his pastoral functions in that city, to which he had returned, always working a little beyond his strength. He was spoken of by all as a man full of sacred fire, ready to die at any moment for his faith. In 1816 he undertook an evangelistic tour in France. This was at the period of the Royalist terrorism, when the followers of the Trestaillons and other persecutors were shedding freely the blood of the Protestants of the South. Nothing daunted, Henry Oberlin carried into the midst of his persecuted brethren Bibles, personal consolations, and material help. He visited Nimes, Montauban, Toulon, and Marseilles. Being at one time under the necessity of travelling at night in an open carriage, he caught a fever, which caused him again to return to his father's house. A year later a terrible fire broke out at Waldersbach. In spite of his delicate health, Henry worked as hard as the rest of the family in the effort to extinguish it. This contributed further to injure his constitution.

He lived for some time afterwards with his brother Charles, who also united the functions of doctor and pastor, at Rothau. Charles and his wife lavished the tenderest care upon their brother, but it was evident that his days were numbered. Feeling the end approaching, he said, looking earnestly in his brother's eyes, "*Take me to my father!*" M. Le Grand immediately sent his carriage for him. The transport over the rugged roads was painful for the invalid. Four strong oxen and two horses were attached to the carriage, which was preceded and surrounded by the mayors and schoolmasters of the Ban de la Roche. Some carefully removed the stones from the road in front of the carriage, and others supported it by their shoulders to prevent its shaking. Madame Charles Oberlin held Henry in one arm, while Louise Scheppler supported him on the other side, and thus he was conducted a distance of two leagues, suffering extreme pain the whole way. Four days afterwards he expired. His sufferings were very great. Frequently, during his anguish, he was heard to exclaim, "Oh, how hard is death, how terrible!" but some moments before the end he placed his trembling hand in that of his father, and, attempting to grasp it firmly, looked upward, and repeated several times the words, "From death unto life, from death unto life."

In 1815 the allied armies entered France. Whilst in the South the Gascons allied themselves with the English, and in the West the nobility and priests rather encouraged the civil war, Alsace and Lorraine remained faithful to the national cause, and

proved how well they deserved the title given to the Vosges of the Thermopylæ of France. They disputed step by step the sacred soil of their country. Volunteer corps were created, and the Ban de la Rochois formed one, under the leadership of the courageous Colonel Wolffe, himself a native of the valleys. It is not necessary to say that Oberlin applauded the patriotism of the mountaineers. But when they were defeated, and all was lost except honour, he then counselled them with wisdom and prudence. In this manner he wrote to them :—

"If there are still in your communes, or in the borders of your communes, any arms, I think it will be necessary, following the counsels of all experienced military commanders, to make a declaration accordingly, and without delay, to the German commander ; and it would be well not to wait until the allies come themselves into the country, otherwise, according to the rights and usages of war, you will expose your community to pillage and destruction. Take care, then, that there remain absolutely nowhere any arms or powder. Be firm, and severe as lions ; regrets will come too late. If at Belmont there are those who resist and refuse to obey your orders, declining to give up their arms, you must mark them. They are not friends of our country ; and when peace is re-established they will be punished by the Government."

Several Russian skirmishers having been pillaged by inhabitants of the town of Neuvillers, Oberlin prescribed the following measure of restitution :—

"Concerning the inhuman robberies practised on certain soldiers and Russian deserters, an exact inventory of the effects pillaged must be given ; they must be priced at their full value ; their value must be doubled, and must then be restored to the person despoiled ; or if this cannot be, on account of the disap-

pearance of the victims, they must be sold, and food must be bought with the price to distribute to the poor people of Neuvillers, who are wise and educate their children well. If among the spoilers there are any who refuse to make restitution, a public subscription must be made to supply the defect. The whole sum, finally, must be collected in order to deliver Neuvillers from the curse which these villains would have brought upon it."

At the beginning of the Revolution, a schism having taken place in the Patriotic Club of Strasbourg, the Jacobins separated themselves from the Constitutional party, who formed a distinct club, the president of which was Frederic de Dietrich, the son of that lord of the manor of the Ban de la Roche who was the friend and benefactor of Oberlin and his people. Frederic was Mayor of Strasbourg, having succeeded to that office at a time when the mayoralty and municipality had greatly compromised themselves in many public transactions. He restored the character of probity and loyalty to the government of the city. He was a personal friend of General Lafayette, who, writing of him in a letter from La Grange in October, 1829, said :—

"My attachment to the memory of Frederic de Dietrich will never cease with my life. He is an excellent man, of a noble and generous heart."

This worthy mayor was a highly-esteemed friend of Oberlin, who speaks of him thus :—

"When this truly excellent man, as much distinguished by his talents as by the nobility of his sentiments, was persecuted by the tyrants who became powerful during the height of the Reign of Terror, he was dragged with his wife from one prison

to another; and at this time, when all the good and virtuous citizens of Strasbourg were dispersed, hiding themselves among the mountains, the young infant of the mayor was abandoned, with his nurse, and was in danger of perishing. A Christian lady, Madame Kantz, took the child with its nurse to her own home, and cherished it. Madame Kantz was a member of a noble family, and suspected by the Revolutionaries. This was sufficient to cause further suspicion to fall upon the Mayor of Strasbourg; and in an access of blind fury the two Jacobin agents, Ruhl and Laurent, seized and conducted him from Mayence to Paris, where he was condemned by the Revolutionary tribunal, and fell a victim to the fanaticism of the times. He perished by the guillotine, together with several other men of the same character. A friend of Oberlin, M. Saum, of Strasbourg, being at that moment in Paris, wrote a touching account to the Pastor of the last moments of this noble son of his former seigneur. He spoke of his heroism and Christian resignation."

A ruinous law-suit had existed for many generations in the Ban de la Roche, concerning the right of way, and of turbary (the right of cutting turf) in the forests and on the mountains. The only fuel attainable by the poor inhabitants was the turf which abounded on the Champ du Feu, and the dried and fallen boughs or tree trunks of the forests. Their right to use these was disputed by the lords of the manor. This law-suit had commenced more than a hundred years previously to Oberlin's entrance on his pastoral duties. It was originally a disputed point between the different communes and the ancient Seigneurs. The suit was suspended during the Revolution, and the forests were declared by the Republican Government to be national property, for the use of the people. In spite of this declaration, the law-suit was renewed after the Revolu-

tion, by M. Champy, who had obtained possession of the forests from the State.

The different points raised in this law-suit were sufficiently numerous and complicated to present to the cupidity of certain attorneys and lawyers a rich mine of wealth. They prolonged the case as much as possible, going from point to point, by means of judgments by default, by appeals, and counter appeals. Meanwhile the poor Ban de la Rochois were obliged to furnish a yearly fund out of their narrow means to continue a trial which seemed always threatening to be brought to a conclusion adverse to their own interests. Oberlin, indignant and outraged by the cupidity of the attorneys, protested openly; he posted upon the door of his room a prayer in which he appealed to the justice of God against the injustice of man, while he constantly exhorted his parishioners to cultivate a conciliatory spirit. Among his papers are found the following. Though incomplete, and not showing clearly to whom addressed, the tone of them is interesting, as being highly characteristic of the writer.

"You ask my advice concerning the carrying on of this law-suit. Here is a statement of the manner in which I would act, were I in your place. Take Theophilus (Theophilus Scheidecker), and go with him to M. Champy. Speak face to face with him concerning the proposed articles of agreement; for never, in any other way, will this law-suit come to an end. Then present these articles to a judge of high integrity, without the intermediary of any other lawyers; and if, in the opinion of this judge, there are any changes to be made, then have a second personal interview with M. Champy. Continue in this manner, yielding

whenever it seems right and possible to do so. He who has commanded us to yield is all-powerful. When these articles are finally accepted by the judge, cause them to be ratified without consulting further with any person whatsoever."

The following is another extract on the same subject :—

"My advice to the communes, after having read the reply of the advocates of M. Champy on the subject of the turbary of the Champ du Feu and Haut-Champ. First, nevermore expect anything of human justice. But implore the help, the grace, the mercy of the great *Counsel for the oppressed, the Lord Jesus Christ.* Secondly, make an appeal to the Prefect of the Lower Rhine (M. Lezay Marnesia), and beseech him, in the name of God, to interest himself in favour of the poor Ban de la Rochois. For if the advice of M. Champy's advocates is to be followed, the Ban de la Roche, sterile and miserable as it naturally is, will be ruined, and seven hundred families of good subjects will be sacrificed in order to add somewhat to the luxuries of a single family, which already enjoys not only an easy subsistence, but great wealth."

Oberlin's constant efforts as a peace-maker were at last crowned with success ; the law-suit was concluded on terms more favourable to the Ban de la Rochois than he had dared to hope. It was in this matter that he first gained the friendship of M. Lezay Marnesia, a man of magnanimous nature. The mayors and other officers of the several communes came as a deputation to Oberlin, after the conclusion of the law-suit, and presented him an address, expressive of their gratitude, and their esteem for him as an able diplomatist and a Christian peace-maker.

Occasions, however, still continued to arise, in which he was called to fight the battles of his poor parishioners, against the exactions of the proprietors of the

land or their agents. The inspectors of forests of the district complained, in the years 1819 and 1820, of the "depredations" made in the forests by the women and children gathering wood. The following letter is from Oberlin to the lord of the manor :—

"DEAR SIR AND BENEFACTOR,—I do not understand the motives of the honourable inspectors of forests. Do they wish to drive the people to excesses and violence, the fruits of despair? Though surrounded on every hand by forests, they have not a stick with which to make a fire to boil their potatoes, or to alleviate the cold of this cruel season, for themselves and families. Assuredly, if God were to deal with every man according as that man has dealt with his fellows, these gentlemen who treat our people so cruelly would find themselves in a very cold and starving condition after death! Oh that they would learn from the example of Jesus Christ, pity and mercy! Then remorse would be spared to them. Death comes nearer every day."

M. Lezay Marnesia, a relation of the Empress Josephine, was in his youth a brilliant scholar. Amongst other works he translated into French the "Don Carlos" of Schiller. He was elected Prefect of Strasbourg, a difficult administration, and one which had hitherto been compromised by prefects of doubtful character. Having first become acquainted with Oberlin in relation to the above-mentioned law-suit, he on several occasions visited him in his home. The following account of one of his visits is written by Mademoiselle Emilie Cumier, daughter of another friend of Oberlin :—

"I had been some days at Waldersbach, visiting our dear and beloved father Oberlin, when a message came saying that the Prefect of Strasbourg would arrive on the following day. The dear father sent round to inform all the mayors of the different

communes in his parish. In the morning, very early, the mayors arrived, accompanied by a troop of young girls festively attired and carrying flowers, in order to welcome the Prefect with honours upon the bridge of Fonday. But the Prefect never arrived, and only turned up two days afterwards, when we had ceased to expect him. I well remember his arrival, which caused us much amusement. It was nine o'clock in the evening. We had just finished supper, and the young Baron de Krudner, who was also a guest in the house, was reciting to us a story. Suddenly he was interrupted by a violent and noisy knocking at the door (a thing which papa detested). A rough and dusty postilion entered and asked, 'Is this the house of M. Oberlin?' adding, 'I have brought him the Prefect of Strasbourg.' Very early the next morning messengers were again sent round to all the mayors, who made haste and arrived again with the company of girls laden with flowers. M. and Madame Lezay appeared much affected with this attention. After the departure of the mayors, our guests went with papa to visit the churches and schools. Then came dinner-time. Although I was a very little girl at the time, yet I did not fail to remark the tact and wit which our dear father showed on this occasion, as he always did. Very distinguished strangers had before this dined at his table, but he never dreamed of changing the customs of his house; although, if he found that these personages required to be taught a little lesson, he would give it them politely and frankly, without 'gilding the pill,' as they say. But here was so great a man at dinner with us! the chief of the Department, who could have done great things for the parish; and, consequently, I thought papa would not wish to shock him in the smallest thing. M. Lezay had a habit when engaged in conversation of crumbling up the bread in his hand and scattering it about. A great quantity of it was thrown about the floor. Papa observed this. He hated waste; and rising gently from his chair, begging his guest to continue his conversation, he carefully gathered together the crumbs of bread. The surprised Prefect asked, 'Pardon me, sir, these are only crumbs of bread!' To which papa replied, 'Pardon me, Mr. Prefect, I dare not suffer these crumbs of bread to be lost;' and he went on gath-

ering them together. 'But they will not be lost,' said the Prefect; 'your hens will eat them.' 'You do not suppose,' said papa, 'that I am such a barbarian, M. Prefect, as to lay upon *you* the duty of feeding my hens! No, I wish you to eat; the hens will be fed by our servant.' At dessert the good Louisa told me to hand round fruit to the honourable company. Madame Lezay Marnesia was seated by the side of M. Le Grand, to whom I said when I handed him the fruit, 'Please eat some, dear uncle.' Madame remarked, 'Ah, is this little girl your niece, sir?' 'No, madam,' he replied, 'there is no relationship between us; but when I arrived at this place of peace, cordiality, and brotherhood, I found that the title of monsieur was considered too cold, and sounded bad. The title of father having already been appropriated, I begged M. Oberlin to allow these children to give me the title of uncle.' 'Ah,' said Madame, addressing herself to the two barons, 'if the title of monsieur is too cold, that of baron must be detestable. So gentlemen! barons! you can retire.' 'I renounce my title on the spot,' said M. Lezay; 'I will rank myself under the orders of our pastor, and wish only to be his first lieutenant.' On the third day of his visit M. Lezay went with his wife to Obernai, where my excellent father had the duty of presiding at the drawing of the conscripts. After a day full of fatigues and anxieties, he was very glad to see his friend the Prefect appear. The Prefect began at once to describe to him with great enthusiasm his visit to the Ban de la Roche. He never seemed weary of speaking of the merits of dear papa Oberlin, and of the veneration and the friendship which he had conceived for that holy patriarch. He concluded by saying, 'My dear Sub-Prefect, this day you have been very unwillingly the cause of many tears and much heart-burning. Now you will do me a great service if you will help me to dry those tears. The unhappy fate of the inhabitants of Belmont* touches my heart. We must try and help them. Write a circular to all the mayors of your arrondisement, begging them in my name to do all they can in order that these poor burnt-out people may be able to rest under their rebuilt houses

* Belmont, one of the towns in Oberlin's parish, had just been destroyed by fire.

again as soon as possible.' No one who knows my father will be astonished to hear that he quickly forgot his fatigues, and set himself to work at the writing of these circulars; he had the satisfaction of sending out couriers in all directions with copies of it at four o'clock the next morning. The most brilliant success crowned this charitable deed. The inhabitants of Belmont were soon re-established in their homes. I wrote this little account at the request of papa Oberlin, but in my own manner, and a copy of it will be found in his escritoire at Waldersbach."

The name of M. Le Grand has been frequently mentioned. Henry Oberlin, in the course of one of his journeys while in the army, was hospitably received by the owner of a factory in Switzerland, in whose household he found the same Christian spirit prevailing with which he had been familiar in his own home. He was especially struck by the manner in which the proprietor, M. Le Grand, interested himself in every individual among his workpeople, instructing them and reading the Bible with them. He at once began to speak of his father, and his great work in the Ban de la Roche. M. Le Grand listened attentively to the affectionate and enthusiastic recital, and from that time inwardly resolved, all events being favourable, to establish himself in the neighbourhood of Oberlin, and to open a small factory in the valleys. This resolve he carried out. His factory became a benefit to the poor inhabitants of the Ban de la Roche, whom he employed chiefly in their own homes, thereby avoiding the separation of families; and he himself became the most intimate and trusted friend of the Oberlin family.

Oberlin often said, "As bread accompanies all our

meals, all through our lives, so ought the reading of the Word of God to accompany all our studies." In the year 1804 the British and Foreign Bible Society was first established in England. Oberlin's name and work had already become known in England, and it was judged expedient to open a correspondence with him, in order, through his means, to form a centre for the distribution of Bibles throughout France. He had long and ardently desired the general circulation of the Bible, and, therefore, gladly assented to the proposals made to him, and became the first foreign correspondent of the Bible Society. The broad principles on which the Society was founded entirely suited his taste. In conjunction with his son, Henri Gottfried, and his friend M. Le Grand, he organised a Bible Society at Waldbach, by means of which depôts were established in different parts of France. This occurred some years before the Paris Bible Society was formed. The Rev. John Owen, in his "History of the British and Foreign Bible Society," alludes to the society formed by Oberlin, of whom he speaks as an extraordinary man, "uniting the simplicity of a patriarch with the zeal of an apostle." A letter addressed to Mr. Owen by Oberlin was printed in the Appendix to the first report of the Bible Society, in which he thanks him for a sum of £30 sent by some English friends for the distribution of Bibles among the villages of Basse Alsace. A second letter to a friend in England on the same subject, published in the Appendix to the second report of the Society, is worthy of being reproduced :—

"*Waldbach, June* 17, 1805.

"What shall I say, my dearest friend? How shall I thank the honourable Bible Society for the second gift—£20—for the spreading of the kingdom of Jesus Christ? I will entreat God for a rich blessing on the Society, and for wisdom to enable me to dispose of its gift effectually. You ask if there is a desire for Bibles in France. I have reason to believe there is. The little Ban de la Roche was a few years ago the only spot throughout the whole of France which enjoyed perfect freedom of religious worship. . . . About fifty years ago, God sent my excellent predecessor, M. Stuber, here—a truly apostolic man, who obtained a considerable reputation throughout all the Catholic neighbourhood. Many Roman Catholics openly said of him, 'This is a man of God.' . . . He sent for fifty French Bibles from Basle, and lent them in the schools, with permission for the scholars to take them home. The result of this was that the neighbours were made attentive to the Bible. A Roman Catholic one day entered his house, and after some desultory conversation, during which he carefully cast his eye round the room, he espied in the window a thick book with a lock. Having heard that Bibles had this appearance, he took it up, looked at the title, and asked, 'Can one have such a book for a crown?' On receiving an answer in the affirmative, he threw down a crown on the table, and hastily ran out of the cottage, and away to his own village, with the Bible under his arm, to the surprise of the bystanders. From this time the demand continually increased. . . . Biel Bibles were procured from Switzerland, and dispersed among the Roman Catholics. Some copies were taken from the people by their priests and burnt, and sometimes a violent contention took place. A priest once found one of his parishioners reading a Bible, and snatched it from him with bitter reproaches. He was about to carry it out of the house, when the man, who was of a determined character, jumped up, snatched his hedge-cutter, placed himself in the door-way, and cried, 'Replace that Bible on the table, reverend sir! I respect your character and office, but a thief is

no true pastor. I will certainly cut you in pieces if you attempt to steal a Bible which has been kindly lent to me.' The priest restored the Bible.

"Before the Revolution I never gave any Bibles to the Roman Catholics with my own hands, but only lent them through the people. Since the Revolution there has been more freedom, so that I can even let the Catholics take the Sacrament in our church. . . . About a fortnight ago I had the pleasure of receiving the thanks of an emigrant priest for a Parisian New Testament. I beg leave to add that many French gentlemen have accepted Bibles from me with apparently sincere joy, and a lady lately came several leagues on horseback in order to request one of me."

The placing out and adoption into families of orphaned or neglected children was an early institution in the Ban de la Roche, under Oberlin's guidance. The merit of the first idea was due, however, to a woman, Sophia Bernard, previously mentioned. She had already taken several poor orphan children into her house, when she received a letter one day from a poor tailor, named Thomas, a Roman Catholic, living in a neighbouring canton, beseeching her to take charge of his three little children—all of whom were under four years of age—as he was so poor as to be unable to provide for them, and their mother was ill and helpless. Sophia and her sister Madeline set out immediately on the receipt of this letter, although the day was far advanced, and they had rugged, dangerous roads to traverse. They provided themselves with baskets, filled with soft wool and flannel, which they slung upon their backs. At length, after a long and fatiguing walk, or rather climb, they reached the top of the hill where poor Thomas's cottage was situated.

They approached silently, and, peeping through the windows, they were satisfied of the truth of the account which the father had given of his family. The apartment was wretched in the extreme, and, on entering, they found the poor babes in as forlorn a condition as it was possible to be, badly nourished, weak, and sick from neglect. Without further delay they rolled them up in the soft wool and flannels, placed them in the baskets at their backs, and trudged home with them in the twilight. Soon afterwards Sophia Bernard saved three helpless little boys from an inhuman father belonging to another canton, who, when they were starving with hunger and cried for food, had trampled them under his feet, and treated them with a cruelty too shocking to relate. To these six children others were soon added. Sophia hired a larger house, engaged a servant, and supported the whole family by her own work and the little earnings of the children, whom she taught to spin cotton.

"A fine young man, of generous disposition, made her an offer of marriage, and, as she hesitated to accept him, he declared he would wait ten years, if necessary, to gain her hand. She then confessed that her motive for refusing him was the grief it would occasion her to part from her little orphans. 'He who takes the mother takes the children also,' replied the young man. On this condition the marriage took place, and all the children were brought up under their mutual care in the most excellent manner." *

This example stimulated others to act in like manner, and every orphan child was hereafter adopted as a member of some family.

* Letter of Oberlin, quoted by Mrs. Cunningham.

M. Paul de Merlin, the author of the "Promenades Alsaciennes," speaks thus of a visit which he paid to Oberlin at the beginning of the present century. Merlin, like many other Roman Catholics, had conceived a profound respect for the patriarch of the Ban de la Roche:—

"I entered this hallowed abode with some feeling of doubt, finding it difficult to assign a motive for my visit. I said to the Pastor that I feared my appearance was inopportune, but that he must excuse the very natural desire that I had to see the benefactor of that country, who, although of a different religion from my own, . . . 'Are you a Christian?' he asks, interrupting me; 'for if you are a Christian, my dear child, we are of the same religion. If you believe that you are a sinner, and that repentance is needful; and if, in accepting the Saviour of men, you supplicate His grace to crown your efforts after excellence, we are of the same religion. We follow the same Saviour; there is but one way; the practices and ceremonies of the different sects are of little consequence, if we walk in this one way. Luther founded no new religion,—he only showed us how to come more directly to Jesus Christ. Whether Catholics or Lutherans, God regards us with equal favour, if we follow closely in the steps of His Divine Son.' I took the liberty of asking my host whether he thought that men who had faithfully followed the moral law written in the conscience, before Jesus Christ appeared on earth, could be saved? He had not the slightest doubt of it. 'You do not think, then,' said I, 'that Socrates, for example, would be shut out from the presence of God?' 'What!' replied he, with great warmth, 'that precious man? Certainly not; on the contrary, I believe that he has a place very near to the throne of God.' I recollect that on one occasion Oberlin was speaking with great vehemence against Rousseau and Voltaire on account of their anti-Christian writings. I took an opportunity of remarking that Rousseau had succeeded in inducing the aristocratic mothers of France to give up the barbarous habit of abandoning their new-born

children to be nursed by strangers, and that Voltaire had been the friend and defender of the Calas family, and of many other oppressed people. It was beautiful to see his countenance gradually relax until it became quite radiant, and to hear the kindness with which he said, '*Ah! les chers hommes.*'" (The dear men.)

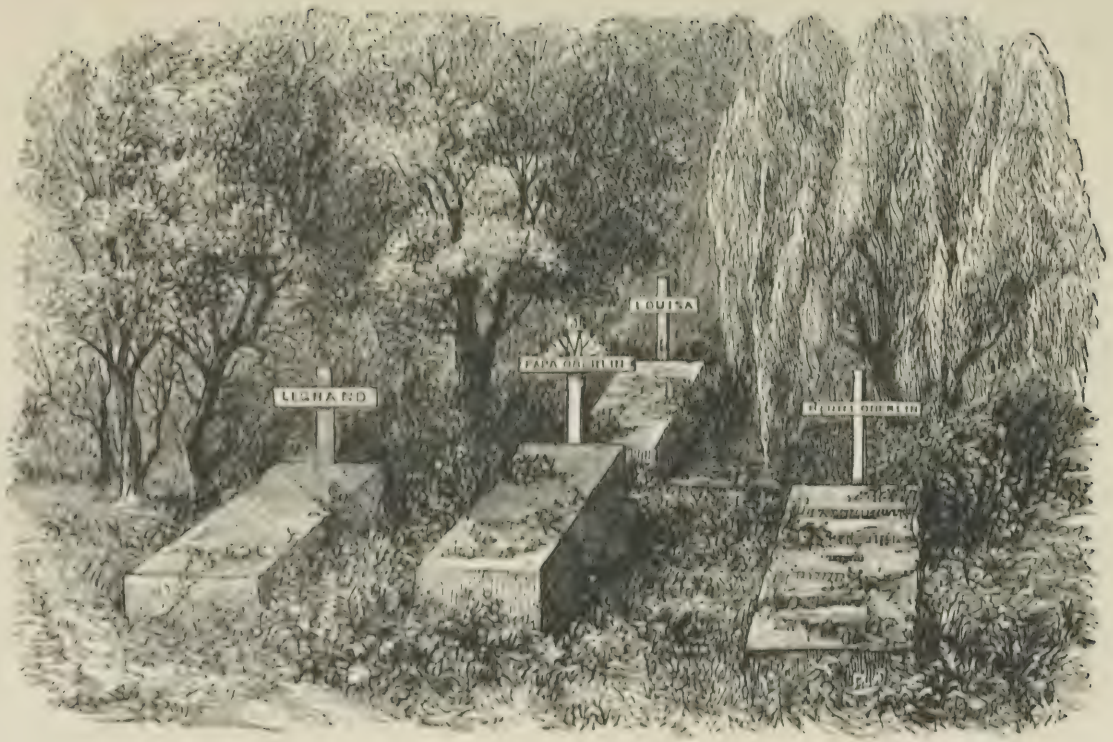
Oberlin was visited on various occasions by Moravian brethern from Herrnhut, with whom he had much sympathy. He was, however, opposed to anything which took the form of ritual, and habitually declined to become a member of any special society, even though heartily approving its object. He thus wrote to a Moravian friend :—

"You tell me, dear friend, that you are not the partisan of any sect, or a member of any confraternity, etc. Bravo! It is the same with myself. I have too much work to do. My parish is my association, confraternity, and *franc-maçonnerie*."

CHAPTER VIII.

OLD AGE—LOVE FOR CHILDREN—DISLIKE FOR ILLEGIBLE WRITING—ACTIVITY UP TO THE LAST—SKETCHES HIS OWN CHARACTER—RECEIVES THE RIBBON OF LEGION OF HONOUR—MAKES RESTITUTION FOR MURDER—PILGRIMAGE OF MLLE. FELICIE—CLOSING YEARS—HIS LAST ILLNESS—DEATH—FUNERAL.

A FEW brief notices of the last days of Oberlin, accompanied by contemporary observations of his character, must conclude this narrative. Like a courageous runner in a race, who puts forth new and almost superhuman energy as he sees the goal to be near, so did this venerable Christian, bowed beneath the weight of years and arduous labours, press on with ever increasing zeal towards the mark of the prize of his high calling in Christ Jesus. In his public discourses he dwelt much on the necessity of growing in likeness to Christ, especially in the readiness to suffer and to die for others, even as He had done. One who visited Waldersbach during his latest years describes his entrance into the church, when all the people instinctively rose to their feet. He turned first towards the part of the church where the children were assembled, calling each one by name in a gentle and affectionate voice, to ascertain whether any were wanting. He then offered up prayer, followed devoutly by the



OBERLIN'S GRAVE.

congregation, all kneeling. His sermon was on the text, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied." When no longer able to walk to the different towns in the valleys for the services of the afternoon or evening of each Sunday, the inhabitants vied with each other in their eagerness to have the honour of lending him a horse. His increasing blindness made it unsafe for him to ride alone. One of the elders always led the horse, while another would walk behind, carrying his Bible and gown. Frequently he was accompanied by a large retinue, who followed in order to enjoy the pleasure of hearing his voice a second time on the same day. "He preserved his characteristic energy," says a contemporary, "to the last." Time had respected his figure, which was always firm and erect. He combated the infirmities of age, keeping his body in subjection, and requiring of it the most prompt obedience. On rising from his seat, and finding his limbs grown somewhat stiff, he would rally himself—"Come along, Fritz! Idle fellow that you are, what has happened to you? where is your wonted force?" He persisted in waiting on himself; and if others, wishing to save him trouble, volunteered some message or service, he would thank them and reply, "No, no, I assure you that exercise and movement are needful for me." When left alone and not engaged in conversation, his countenance bore at times, in spite of its permanent expression of serenity and submission to the Divine will, a look of deep sadness; but the moment any one addressed him, and especially when children came around him,

his face was lit up with the most tender and beautiful smile.

"I have been thinking much of you during the sleepless hours of the night," he would say. "Never grow old! you see I am now good for nothing; I cannot see, I cannot hear. I was young once, and oh, what strength, what vivacity I then had. Where is that vigorous man now? he can hardly drag himself along. . . . But do not imagine, my darlings, that I murmur because of this. Ah no, the good God is a little wiser than old Fritz."

His daily walk was towards the beautiful little fountain, which they called the Belle Goutte. When, as was constantly the case, one of his parishioners stopped to greet him, he would affectionately hold out his hand, asking, "What is your name, dear friend?" his failing sight preventing an easy recognition; at the same time his countenance beamed with joy at every such token of the love of his people.

To the last, while yet able to read, he occupied himself with the study of the Greek and Hebrew text of the Scriptures, and with geographical researches, to which he had always been devoted. An essay on the work of Cicero "on old age" appears to have been the last labour of a literary kind on which he was engaged before his death. It bears the date 1825.

There were several things which peculiarly annoyed him, and even excited his anger at times. One of these was the frequency of the interruptions during his hours of study to which he was sometimes subjected. He would keep a visitor standing unnoticed in his study for a few moments, until he had concluded some train of thought, or finished the writing of a sentence, and

then rise and receive him courteously. There were certain hours during which he forbade absolutely all visits, except those of persons "wearing sabots" (the poorest of his people). Illegible writing was another offence which he found it difficult to forgive. To write illegibly, he asserted, was "a sign of a profound selfishness, which rendered the writer utterly careless in regard to the trouble, pain, and loss of time caused to the person who had the duty of reading such writing." In truth, his judgment on this matter was not too stern; for it is in the power of every one who wills it to write legibly. New and extravagant fashions in dress annoyed him. On one occasion a young coxcomb from Strasbourg chanced to be among the "pilgrims" who visited the patriarch of the valleys. He wore his hair, as was the mode at that time in high society, in luxuriant curls, a fringe of "love-locks" falling low over the forehead down to the eyebrows. This young gentleman was otherwise decked out in satin doublet and high-heeled shoes. Oberlin contemplated him for a moment from head to foot with an expression of mingled amusement and pity, and then remarked: "So, so! the men of Strasbourg, then, have become so degenerate that they are afraid to pass through the streets with open brow, but must needs shade their countenance thus!" Every one dressed with the greatest simplicity in the Ban de la Roche, and visitors coming there from the great world usually conformed to that habit, temporarily at least, from respect to the Pastor. He had a playful manner of correcting any of those weaknesses which have

been mentioned. Writing to a young man, a former pupil, on one occasion, he said, "With your fashion of mending pens, it is impossible to form a single letter well. There is only wanted, however, a slight change in the *bec*, and all would go well. Do you not think there is a certain likeness between the nose of the writer and that of his pen. Both would be the better for a slight curtailment." In moments of the greatest "vivacity," when one of his pupils or children had tried his temper, a little velvet or leather skull-cap, which he wore in the house, "would make one single leap from his head to that of the delinquent." This was the manner, it will be remembered, in which his father was accustomed also to enforce his commands, the rapidity of the action of the hand scarcely allowing it to be seen that it was by the will of the wearer that the cap made that sudden bound! The child, thus reminded of its duty, was always bound to restore the cap respectfully to its owner.

He continued to be very frugal in matters of diet, etc., although requiring more nourishment as his health became less robust. His mid-day meal consisted of soup, vegetables, a very small portion of animal food, and a single glass of Rhine wine. Never, since the question of slave-grown sugar had been brought before him, would he touch in any form that article of diet; it seemed to him that "every grain of sugar consumed was a drop of negro blood."

He always retired to his room at ten at night, and rose at five. But he now rarely slept for more than an hour or two. His housekeeper and children fre-

quently overheard him during the night interceding for one or another of them, and sometimes ejaculating, "O my people, my poor parish! God have pity on my people!" With the feeling of a father towards his children, he thought that none would love them in future as he had done.

When visited by anyone whom he knew to be of saintly character, and living very near to the Saviour, he would sometimes weep for joy, and greet them as those who "prayed without ceasing for the souls of others." He frequently expressed great pain at the fact of his inability to work any longer actively for the good of others. When charged to cherish his enfeebled health, and to live as long as he could, he would answer playfully that that was what his body itself craved of him; "but I shall show no indulgence to its request," he said. Almost to the last he continued to come down stairs to the family repasts. He could not endure that any habit which might degenerate into self-indulgence should gain any ascendency over him.

He was very fond of taking snuff; but perceiving that this *soulagement* was becoming a little too necessary to him, he "took prompt measures." "Ah, my snuff-box!" he cried, "you want to be my master, do you? I shall show which of us two is the master. To prison, then!" He then locked it up in a cupboard on the ground floor, so that, in order to take a pinch of snuff, if he so desired, he was obliged to descend from his study, which was upstairs. He knew that he would seldom give himself this trouble, as he disliked any interruption of his studies.

When Mr. Cunningham visited Oberlin he asked him to write out for him a sketch *of his own character*, to accompany the medallion portrait with which he had presented him. Oberlin smiled at the request, but being urged, he sat down and wrote the following description immediately, which is wonderfully just and appreciative, seeing how rarely men thoroughly know themselves :—

"I am a strange compound of contradictory qualities, and do not know exactly what to make of myself. I am intelligent, and yet my powers seem very limited. Prudent and more politic than most of my fellow pastors ; yet apt to blunder, especially when I am the least excited. I am daring and courageous, whilst at the same time I am aware that I am secretly sometimes very cowardly. I am very upright and sincere ; yet, through being tempted to be very pleasant to everyone, I am to a certain extent insincere. I am a Frenchman, and also a German ; noble, generous, ready to render service faithfully, and very grateful. The least benefit or kindness affects me deeply ; it is never forgotten by me ; yet on the other hand I am flighty and indifferent. I am irritable to a most formidable degree, and opposition creates in me an astonishing amount of firmness, especially in matters of conscience. I have a lively imagination, but no memory. Histories which I have taken pains to impress on my mind remain with me to a certain extent ; but dates, and the names of persons, I often forget the next day, notwithstanding all the pains I take to remember them. I used to write Latin fluently and even elegantly, but now I can scarcely put three or four words together. I make extracts from books, and am able to instruct others in some branch of science for a time ; but a few years later my pupils—even if they know nothing more than what I taught them—may in turn become my teachers ; and the books from which I made extracts—with a few exceptions—appear wholly new to me. It is my habit to work my way through my studies till I obtain clear ideas. I have a great talent for removing difficulties in order to render

things smooth and easy to everyone. I am so very sensitive, tender-hearted, and compassionate, that I can never find words corresponding to my feelings, so that the latter almost overpower me, and often cause me acute pain. I am always busy and working, but also I am fond of ease and indolence. I am quick in making resolutions, and equally so in carrying them into practice. I have a profound reverence for women. I am a great lover of painting, music, and poetry ; but I have no skill in any of them. Mechanics and natural science are my favourite studies. I have a great love of regularity, and of arranging and classifying ; but my weak memory renders it difficult to me. I am exceedingly addicted to planning and scheming, and I endeavour in my peculiar way to do things in the best manner possible."

In 1818 the Royal Agricultural Society of France bestowed upon Oberlin the gold medal of the Society, in acknowledgment of the services rendered by him to the agriculture of the Ban de la Roche, and the impulse given by his example in other portions of the country. In 1819 he was agreeably surprised by receiving a royal order for his decoration with the ribbon of the Legion of Honour. The order ran as follows :—

"Louis, by the grace of God, King of France. . . . desiring to mark our approbation of the Sieur Jean Frederic Oberlin on account of the services he has rendered to the State, we nominate him as a Chevalier of the Royal Order of the Legion of Honour, with all the prerogatives attached thereto. Given at our Chateau of the Tuileries in the year 1819."

Oberlin afterwards said to some of his friends, "The king has had the goodness to send me this decoration ; but what have I done to deserve it? Would not anyone in my place have done all that I have done and more?" He placed the royal letter and other documents relating to the matter in a safe envelope, on

which after his death were found, written in a firm hand, the words, "An old knight of eighty years."

To his latest days he was always the chivalrous champion of the oppressed. In the earlier years of his ministry he heard one day, through his open study window, a great commotion in the village; he looked out, and saw the whole commune, young and old, *en masse*, crowding round a poor stranger, jeering and hooting him. He went into the street to ask the cause of the noise. "A Jew, a Jew!" cried the foolish people, renewing their pursuit of the harmless victim. It was with difficulty that Oberlin obtained silence. When he had done so, he addressed the crowd in the severest language, showing them that they were proving themselves altogether unworthy of the name of Christians, by treating with contempt a man who had the misfortune of not knowing the true and only Saviour. Then hoisting on to his own shoulders the soiled valise of the poor stranger, and taking his hand in his own, he led him into the Presbytère, where he entertained him hospitably until the excitement was passed, when he accompanied him some distance on his onward journey. In the same spirit he acted on a later occasion, when a Jew had been robbed and murdered on one of the remote heights of the Ban de la Roche. Oberlin caused a pension to be paid to his widow for some years afterwards. The widow, astonished at receiving so generous a gift from the pastor of so poor a parish, asked him how it was that he was able thus to help her. He replied that under the Old Covenant, the Jewish people were required to offer

certain sacrifices in order to remove the curse from any place in which a murder had been committed; that under the New Covenant of grace and mercy he did not hold himself freed from the obligation to make intercession for the people of his parish in which the murder had been committed, and that these gifts to the widow of the murdered man were offered in place of the ancient sacrifices.

With the same kindness he aided the widow of a Jewish colporteur who had fallen into great poverty, and whose husband had left debts in the Ban de la Roche. He procured a list of the creditors, and himself paid off the greater part of the debts. His kindness to animals was extreme, and his example in this respect produced a marked change in the manner in which the Ban de la Rochois treated their beasts of burden and domestic animals.

A French gentleman who paid a visit to Oberlin in his old age, wrote thus of him :—

"His countenance is open, kind, and friendly, and his every action bears the impress of strong benevolence. His conversation is easy, flowing, and witty. In the evening we accompanied him a league on his way back to Waldbach, which he had left in the morning on a pastoral visit. We climbed a wooded hill; the sun was setting, and shedding a golden radiance over the forests and slopes; the air was calm and pure. . . . Sometimes we paused to look around us in admiration. One moment, when about half-way up the hill, he paused and answered in a soft low tone to a remark I had made to him, 'Ja, ich *bin* glücklich' (Yes, I *am* happy). These words are seldom pronounced unhesitatingly by an inhabitant of earth, and they were impressive from the lips of one who was a stranger to all the favours of fortune, to ease, ambition, and luxury, and whose joys

were those which a life of faith in God and active benevolence impart. We longed to live like him, and to share his happiness. As we continued our way, the moon rose in all her majesty, night drew on, and the stars appeared. Again, turning to survey the whole exquisite scene, Oberlin remarked, 'If a ray of light takes five years to travel from Sirius to the earth, travelling at the rate of twelve millions of miles in a minute, how much swifter must the communication of spirits be!' He then referred to Gabriel, who, being 'caused to fly swiftly,' approached Daniel at the time of the evening oblation, to announce to him that from the moment of the utterance of his first request his prayer had been heard; and he then pictured to us the facility with which he believed we should approach and converse with one another in a future state. . . . The Pastor's house stands well, and has from the garden side a romantic view. Though very plainly furnished, it suggests that one is in the residence of no ordinary man. It has that elegance which extreme cleanliness and order give. . . . The most complete equality reigns in his house; children, pupils, servants are all treated alike; their places at table change, that each may have his or her turn in sitting next to him, with the exception of Louise Scheppler and his two maidservants, who sit at the foot of the table, also as members of the family. It is his custom to salute them all night and morning, giving to the servants also his hand, and inquiring after their health. All seem perfectly happy, and are ready to sacrifice their lives for him if needful. . . . Oberlin has the appearance of one who is constantly looking forward with joyful hope and confidence to his eternal home."

One of the latest pilgrimages recorded to the house of the Pastor during his life, is that of a Roman Catholic lady, Madlle. Felicie T——, her brother, and a friend, published in a small book, entitled "Souvenir d'Alsace," published at Strasbourg in 1824. The following extracts contain a graphic picture of the sweet mountain home, and the beautiful character of the aged Christian.

"We arrived at last at the top of a hill whence the view embraced the whole valley of Waldbach. This modest abode of peace and good manners is situated in an elevated valley. Four other villages crown four neighbouring heights, and seem to keep guard over this, the centre of their common life and prosperity. It was Ascension day. The population of the Ban de la Roche was assembled in the valley of Waldbach, to take part in or be spectators at the athletic sports, races, etc., instituted by Oberlin and M. Le Grand, in order to encourage muscular force and skill among the youth of the valleys. These games took place upon a plateau at the foot of the enormous rock which gives its name to the canton. Here a crowd of spectators was assembled. We joined them. The competitors in the races, wrestling and other exercises showed a spirit of emulation which never degenerated into jealousy. The lookers-on expressed their congratulations or regrets with a reticence and moderation which detracted nothing from the appearance of lively interest in the scene. The women we thought in general very pretty; their dress is elegant and simple. They are treated with great respect by the men, and no inconvenience whatever results from the free mingling together of the sexes. I observed a girl of singularly attractive countenance in the crowd, and addressed a remark to her. She said, 'It is a grievous pity that the dear father is growing so old; he can no longer attend the fêtes. You ought to see how everyone acts when he is among us; we are so careful to please him, for he is the chief and the protector of our country. We all love him as he loves us.' I replied, 'We know well at Strasbourg how much your pastor is revered, and I have come here to-day with these two gentlemen on purpose to see him.' 'Ah! is it so?' said the girl with a beaming smile, 'your presence will give him great pleasure: he loves strangers, and always receives them joyfully. You will find him at home, I believe, for he seldom goes out; he needs to rest a great deal now.' We retraced our steps to the village of Waldbach, where, on arriving, we looked around for a house which should seem superior to the rest; but in vain. The house of the Pastor, which is thatched like the rest, bears no special mark of distinction. An old woman sitting before her

cottage door, pointed it out to us. We knocked; the door was opened by a lady of about forty-five. It was Oberlin's daughter, Madame Graff. Her dress was in its plainness precisely the same as that worn by the peasant women we had just left; it contrasted somewhat with the elegance of her manners and the purity of her speech. We asked for the pastor. 'You are unfortunate, gentlemen,' she replied, 'for eight days past he has never left the house, and he is now at this moment gone out to see a sick person; but come in and be seated; he will return shortly.' Madame Graff and the old servant, Louise, who seated herself also in the room beside us, entertained us with much grace and goodness. Madame Graff lives with her aged father, her husband M. Graff sharing with him the pastoral functions, which he is now unable to fulfil alone. I asked the age of the venerable Pastor. 'He has just entered his eighty-fourth year,' replied Madame Graff. 'It is time that he should rest a little; but his heart still beats with all the ardour of youth. He tries still to climb the mountains, and goes out in all weathers. A fortnight ago he would go up to Belmont, to see, as he said, his friends there, and speak to them the word of Jesus. The long walk fatigued him greatly. When he had made about two-thirds of the ascent of the mountain, he had the misfortune to place his foot in a crevice in the rocky path, which his enfeebled sight prevented his perceiving. He fell, and being too much shaken to be able to go on, he remained patiently seated, until two villagers, happening to pass, helped him to climb the rest of the way to Belmont.' Seeing me observing a portrait on the wall, Madame Graff explained that it was the portrait of Madame Oberlin, who had been dead forty-two years. 'Her memory,' she said, 'is deeply engraved on the heart of her husband. Sometimes he awakes in the night, painfully agitated, having dreamed that she was present, and finding it only a dream. Sometimes he will stretch forth his arms and seem to clasp her to his breast before he becomes fully awake, and the blank presenting itself anew comes to him with so much bitterness that he weeps abundant tears.' While we were conversing we heard footsteps at the door. It was Oberlin. I had expected to meet a man bowed down beneath the weight of years. What was my surprise

therefore to see him enter, erect and vigorous, with a countenance marked by great vivacity as well as by nobility and gentleness. He advanced at first without seeing us, for he had passed suddenly from the bright sunlight into a room which was in shadow. My brother approaching him, explained that he had come from Strasbourg with his sister and a friend to pay to him their tribute of reverence. 'Oh, pardon,' cried Oberlin, 'I did not see you, my eyes are dim, and the sun has no pity on them.' When he perceived me, he turned to the other gentleman and asked him if I was his wife. When informed that I was not married, he turned to me smiling, took my arm in a playful manner, and said, 'Make haste then and get married, for a young lady who travels ten leagues in order to visit an old priest in a thatched cottage must certainly be calculated to make an excellent wife;' and without any pause or stiffness, he continued, 'Yes, my friends, I have a good opinion of every one who comes to see me. If I am unworthy of my reputation, they do not know it until they see me; and any one who seeks the acquaintance of an honest man, who has nothing whatever in this world to give, must at least be as honest as himself.' After further remarks full of kindness and humour, the Pastor requested us to take some light refreshment, consisting of bread, cake, light wine, and dishes prepared with milk: he pressed us also to remain until the following day, which, however, we were unable to do. He then took us to his library. I remarked the activity with which he ran upstairs. I observed three books on the table, a volume of Goethe, the 'Œuvres Spirituelles' of Fénelon, and the Gospel according to St. Matthew. This latter was lying open. I had the greatest desire to know something of the Pastor's history, and whispered my wish to my brother, who at once respectfully mentioned it to Oberlin. 'My friends,' replied he, 'my life has none of the elements of a romance; it will be lost in future history. In what way can it interest people of the great world to hear of a place from which literature, the fine arts, and all the grandeur and excitements of this life are completely excluded?' 'Venerable minister,' I quickly replied, 'do not suppose that we are people of the great world; indeed, I believe that we are not altogether

unworthy to hear you.' Oberlin smiled kindly, and said, 'I should be grieved, my beautiful child, that you should imagine I judge you as not worthy. I must therefore obey your wish.' Pausing for a moment, he cast his eyes upon the open book lying on his table, and taking the first words that presented themselves, he read, 'Be ye therefore the children of your Father which is in heaven, who causeth His sun to shine upon the evil and the good, and sendeth His rain upon the just and the unjust.' 'I will speak to you, my friends,' he continued, 'of my past life, that you may better judge of those principles which have guided me. Listen.' Having caused us to be seated, he recited to us, in a simple and modest but graphic manner, the early history of 'one Fritz,' whom he described as a being of great impetuosity and of many faults. Having spoken of his childhood and youth, he said, 'The greatest episode in human life, *love*, must necessarily have had a place in the history of so passionate a being as Fritz. His heart was taken captive more by the virtues even than by the personal charm of the woman to whom he had the happiness of uniting his lot. He loved; the state of his mind would have proved unfavourable to the arduous pursuit of his studies and active duties, had not the mistress of his thoughts herself taken the matter in hand. She assured him that to gain her esteem he must become a man of knowledge and science as well as of noble sentiments. He therefore laboured with energy to this end, devoting every moment which he was unable to consecrate to her society to the pursuit of learning, spiritual and human, exercising the most stern self-denial and self-control, so that after a time the only trace apparent of his passionate and impatient youth was a force of character which made him ready for all vicissitudes. Never was a marriage happier than his; it was the perfection of earthly companionship and spiritual communion. Her judgment was his guide in all matters. A word, a single word, spoken by her had for him the most august authority. Retreat and solitude, with such a companion, were the height of human felicity. She constituted, in fact, his life.' . . . While speaking, the old man had risen from his seat, and stood erect, commanding. His countenance was illuminated with the fire of a noble and undying

passion. His thoughts seemed to be far away; a bright colour had returned to his pale face. All traces of old age were for the moment completely effaced. He was as one transfigured by the memory of an ineffable joy. As we looked at him, we forgot his age and his infirmities, and realised only the presence of the sacred fire which was burning in his breast. Recovering himself, he exclaimed, 'But, my friends, to what excess of weakness have I given way! This poor Fritz, this old Oberlin, so far from yielding to any bitter regrets, remembers that the will of God is always just and good. I will now continue the recital of what I have been able to do in my parish, through the impulse given me by the being I so ardently loved. . . . After her death I concentrated my dearest affections on the children she had left me, and redoubled my efforts, in order to realise the hope which she had cherished of the complete civilisation of the Ban de la Roche.' After continuing the account of his labours, he concluded with these words:—'My Creator has blest my efforts, and has granted me long life. My end approaches now. My failing hand can no longer carry out the desires of my mind; my knees tremble; my faltering steps carry me but slowly whither I would go. But my example will remain. It is the sole heritage which I leave my children.' He ceased. Our silence expressed our emotion. He, with his eyes fixed on the ground, remained for a time motionless. A thought of sadness seemed to have taken hold of him. Perhaps it was the memory of his sons whom he had laid in the grave. At last he arose and greeted us anew, following us with his benediction as we took leave. We left this sacred abode with regret mingled with joy. A guide whom we had summoned to direct us on the nearest path accompanied us towards the high-road to Strasbourg."

Madame Wolf, the daughter of Oberlin known as Fidelité, died two years before him. He bore this loss with calmness, in the full assurance that he would in a short time be united to her, as to the other beloved members of his family who had gone before.

On Sunday the 28th of May, 1826, Oberlin was seized with a violent attack of shivering, accompanied with faintness, which lasted till a late hour in the night. From this time till his death, five days later, his sufferings were very great. He was unable to take any nourishment further than a little water. Two days before his death, being parched with thirst, he endeavoured to drink a drop of water. The contraction of his throat made it impossible. "Go down!" he said, addressing the water, in his accustomed quick, peremptory, and, at the same time, playful manner; but "alas," says his biographer, "the commanding voice was no longer obeyed;" he had lost the power to swallow. The whole of Monday and Tuesday were passed in much pain, except when he fainted and remained unconscious for short periods. He was often heard to murmur, in the German which he usually spoke when uttering aloud his thoughts to himself, "O Herr Jesu! mach ein ende! mach feyerabend! O ich flehe zu Dir. Mach ein ende der Mühseligheit meiner tage." "O Lord Jesus, make an end! Grant me rest! I flee to Thee! Oh, end the sufferings of my life." On the evening of Tuesday, his friend M. Le Grand, who had been absent at Basle, came to see him. Oberlin greeted him with a joyful smile, and folding him in his arms, said, in a distinct voice, "The Lord bless you and yours! May He be with you day and night." That night and the following were passed in sore pain, with increasingly severe convulsions. He continued almost without ceasing to utter low plaintive cries, which pierced the hearts of his loving children and

his faithful nurse, Louise, now unable to bring any alleviation to his sufferings. When unable any longer to speak, he would take the hand of one or other of those who happened to be nearest to him, and press it to his heart, in token of the love he bore them to the last. At six o'clock on the morning of Thursday, the 1st of June, the last day of his life, M. Le Grand again came to him. He had then entirely lost the use of speech, his limbs were cold, and he was bathed with the chill perspiration of death. His countenance, however, was full of serenity and intelligence. He had strength left to raise his hand, which he did with the accustomed quick action, removing his little skull-cap in token of reverence, and then clasping his hands in prayer, he looked upwards. He could not utter a word, but his look was a prayer. His countenance beamed with joy as he continued to gaze heavenwards. In a few moments he closed his eyes, never to open them again on earth, and remained still and motionless until nine o'clock. Then began the sad and painful last conflict, when life and death seemed to be wrestling together for the possession of the worn-out frame. At eleven o'clock he died, and the slow sad tones of the passing-bell announced to the inhabitants of the valleys that they had lost their beloved chief, their friend and benefactor, who for nearly sixty years had laboured and prayed unceasingly for them.

From the day of the Pastor's death till that of his interment—the 5th of June—the rain poured in torrents, and darkness covered the skies; but on the morning of that day the sun shone forth with warm

and brilliant light. The valleys were filled with people assembling from all sides for the funeral. Early in the morning a silent cortège was seen cleaving the clouds which still wrapped themselves thickly round the rugged summits of the Champ du Feu. These were the ecclesiastical and lay members of the Consistory of Barr descending the mountain. Their nearest approach to the Ban de la Roche was by a mountain-path traversing these heights. They were accompanied by a number of the citizens of Barr, to whom the memory of Oberlin was dear. From the other side, by the valley of Schirmeck, there flowed in a concourse of people from Strasbourg and its neighbourhood.

The chief biographer of Oberlin, Stuber, writes :—

"I was one of the first to arrive at the Presbytère of our lamented friend. I went up to the study. There his mortal remains reposed in a coffin, the glass lid of which enabled us to gaze upon his features, which were still beautiful in death, wearing the calm, bright smile with which we were familiar. By the side of the coffin kneeled an aged man, absorbed in prayer and contemplation. This was a Roman Catholic schoolmaster from a neighbouring canton, who had walked a long distance, inspired by the reverence for the bodies of the saints inculcated by his Church, to render a last homage to the mortal remains of the man to whom no Christian community could deny that title. At midday the long procession began to file from the Presbytère at Waldbach to the Church of Fonday, in which the Pastor was to be buried. The mayors of the several communes of the parish—all white-haired men, and personal friends and disciples of Oberlin—carried the coffin, followed by the elders of the churches, the family and servants of Oberlin, the members of the Consistory of Barr, etc. The cortège was so extensive that when the first ranks reached Fonday, the last followers

had not yet quitted the garden-gate of the Presbytère at Waldbach. The distance is over two miles. The brilliant sunshine poured down upon the woods which Oberlin had planted, upon the meadows which he had cultivated, now dressed in the bright hues of summer, freshened by the late rains, and upon the hamlets which he had turned into abodes of peace and industry, the streams which he had restrained and directed, the bridges he had constructed, and the roads which he had cut out of the solid rock. A silent multitude thronged the road-sides and the adjoining meadows; they were of all ages and conditions, and of various forms of religious faith and worship. Many had come from afar. Groups of Roman Catholic women—some of whom were very poor—were waiting near the entrance to the churchyard at Fouday. They all fell on their knees as the coffin approached, some weeping, others blessing aloud the name of Oberlin. The bells of all the towns and hamlets of the valleys sounded forth their mournful dirge, answering each other, as it seemed, from the mountains; while a hymn—of praise rather than of mourning—was sung by a crowd of children and young persons gathered from all the towns, and formed into compact ranks around the Church of Fonday. The coffin was placed in the chancel, somewhat raised. A very small proportion of the mourners were able to enter the church; all, both without and within, maintained a deep and reverential silence. Several women sat grouped upon the steps of the chancel, leaning their heads against the coffin, their attitude expressing very touchingly the clinging affection which they felt for their pastor. M. Zaegli, president of the Consistory of Barr, ascended the pulpit, and read the last address of Oberlin to his people, designed by him to be read to them after his death. It began by a brief sketch of his own youth, and of the means which had been used by God to prepare him for the work of his life in the Ban de la Roche. After some earnest and useful exhortations, the address concluded as follows:—

"'For my own children I fear nothing. I have too often experienced the goodness of God for myself,—I know too well His tenderness, His wisdom, and His inexhaustible love, to dare to have any fears on their account. Beyond this, I know that

God hears prayer. Now, since their earliest infancy, their mother and I have never ceased to entreat Him to make our children true disciples of Jesus Christ, and workers in His vineyard. And if they are this, they will want for no temporal thing during this poor short earthly life.

"'As for you, my beloved parishioners, God will never forget nor forsake you. All will go well with you. Only attach yourselves closely to Him, and let Him arrange all for you. Oh, that you would forget my name, to remember only that of Jesus Christ, whom I have preached to you! He is your Pastor, who sent me to you, after having trained me from my youth to be useful to you. He only is holy, wise, all-powerful, generous beyond all our imaginings; while I am but a poor miserable mortal. There is no salvation in any except in Him. Come to Him as you are, with all your sins and infirmities; He will heal, save, and perfect you. . . . Farewell, farewell, dear friends! farewell! I have loved you exceedingly. Even the severity which I have sometimes thought it necessary to use, only flowed from the ardent desire which I have ever had for your happiness. May God recompense you for all the services, benefits, respect, and kindness which you have shown to me, His unworthy servant. I pray Him to forgive those who have opposed me or done me harm; for certainly they knew not what they did.

"'O God let Thine eye be upon my people, and Thine ear open to their prayers. O Lord Jesus Christ, who didst lay upon me this charge, suffer me now to place it again in Thy hands. Accomplish their salvation. Guide and protect them, the little and the great, those in positions of command, and those who serve. Amen. Amen. Amen.'"

After prayer offered, the elders lifted the coffin and carried it again into the open air, and to the prepared grave, which stood by the side of the tomb of Henry Oberlin. Having lowered it into its last resting-place, the most aged man of the Ban de la Roche planted at the head a little iron cross—the same which stands there now—which had been placed in

his hands by Louise Scheppler. Several persons then addressed a few words in turn to the vast multitudes assembled, of whom necessarily only the first ranks could hear what was said. M. Bedel, a physician of Schirmeck, then stepped forward, as if urged by an irresistible impulse to render his share of homage, and concluded a few eloquent words by saying, "The pilgrims who will in after days visit these mountains will pause here, and will say, 'Here rest the mortal remains of the modern Las Casas, the apostle of humanity.' M. Luthrot followed, and his were the last words spoken at the grave: 'We have been recounting what has passed on earth, but who among us can depict what is passing in the presence of the Lord in heaven? We, men and women, have wept to-day; but the angels of God are rejoicing to-day, for the arrival in the eternal mansions of the spirit of this just one made perfect."

THE END.

PUBLICATIONS OF

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY.

Scenes from the Life of St. Paul, and their Religious Lessons. By the Rev. DEAN HOWSON, D.D., joint Author of "The Life and Epistles of St. Paul." Illustrated by Paolo Priolo. Imperial 8vo. 6s. handsomely bound.

William Tyndale. A Contribution to the Early History of the English Bible. By the late Rev. R. DEMAUS, M.A. With Portrait. Crown 8vo. 7s. 6d. cloth boards; 17s. morocco.

Hugh Latimer: a Biography. Compiled from Original Documents. By the late Rev. R. DEMAUS, M.A. Crown 8vo. Portrait. 5s. cloth boards.

John Bunyan: an Autobiography. With Seventeen Page Illustrations by E. N. DOWNARD. Engraved by E. Whymper. 6s. cloth extra, gilt edges.

Isaac Watts: his Life and Writings, his Homes and Friends. By EDWIN PAXTON HOOD. Illustrations. 8vo. 6s. cloth boards.

The Life of John Howe; with an Analysis of his Writings. By Professor HENRY ROGERS, Editor of "The Works of John Howe." Portrait. 8vo. New Edition. 5s. cloth boards. Ditto. Cheap Edition. Crown 8vo. 3s. cloth boards.

John Newton of Olney and St. Mary Woolnoth. An Autobiography and Narrative, compiled chiefly from his Diary and other unpublished Documents. By the Rev. JOSIAH BULL, M.A. Portrait. 8vo. 5s. cloth boards.

Life of Rev. Richard Knill, of St. Petersburg. By Rev. C. M. BIRRELL. With Review of his Character, by the late Rev. J. A. James. New and Revised Edition, with Steel Portrait and Engravings. Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.

Life of Richard Baxter. With Steel Portrait. Small crown 8vo. 1s. 6d. cloth boards.

Life of Felix Neff, Pastor of the High Alps. 18mo. 1s. 6d. cloth boards; 4s. 6d. morocco.

Pictures from the German Fatherland, drawn with Pen and Pencil. By the Rev. SAMUEL G. GREEN, D.D. Profusely illustrated. 8s. handsome cloth.

French Pictures, drawn with Pen and Pencil. By the Rev. SAMUEL G. GREEN, D.D. With fine Engravings. Imperial 8vo. 8s. elegantly bound.

Swiss Pictures, drawn with Pen and Pencil. By the late Rev. S. MANNING, LL.D. Profusely illustrated. Elegantly bound, 8s. Imp. 8vo. *New Edition.*

Homes and Haunts of Luther. By the Rev. Dr. STOUGHTON, Author of "Stars of the East," etc. With numerous Engravings by Whymper and others. Small 4to. 8s. cloth boards, gilt edges.

Footsteps of Italian Reformers. By the Rev. JOHN STOUGHTON, D.D. Quarto. 9s. boards, gilt edges.

British Heroes and Worthies. Illustrated with Twenty Portraits finely engraved. Printed on Toned Paper. Small 4to. 8s. handsomely bound.

Past and Present in the East. By the Rev. HARRY JONES, M.A. Fine Engravings. 5s.

Life in the Southern Isles: or, Scenes and Incidents in the South Pacific and New Guinea. By the Rev. W. WYATT GILL, B.A. With Illustrations. Gilt edges, 5s. 6d.

The Mirage of Life. Fine Edition. Illustrations by TENNIEL. 16mo. 4s. 6d. cloth, gilt edges.

The Waldensian Church in the Valleys of Piedmont, from the Earliest Period to the Present Time. With Engravings and Map of the Valleys. Imp. 16mo. 5s. cloth extra, gilt edges.

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY,
56 PATERNOSTER ROW, AND 65 ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD.